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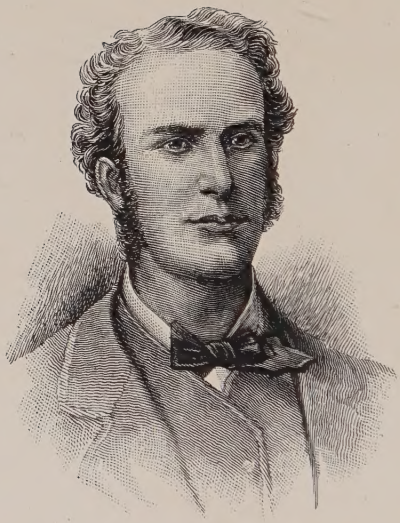

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

OXFORD EDITION

POEMS OF

ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION, NOTES
AND APPENDIXES, BY

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PREFACE

No one can ever write a life of Adam Lindsay Gordon without building on the foundation laid by the late Mr. Alexander Sutherland, whose early death is still deplored by all who value accurate and painstaking work in the field of literary biography. His seven chapters dealing with the poet, in *The Development of Australian Literature*, by Henry Gyles Turner and Alexander Sutherland; George Robertson & Co., 1898 (now unfortunately out of print), give us the story of Gordon's career, and show us the man 'in his very habit as he lived'. I have therefore in the main followed Mr. Sutherland's story, though here and there I have pointed out inaccuracies in detail, such as the fact that Gordon's only child who died at ten months old, was a girl and not a boy, and also that Gordon spent the last night before his death in a rather different fashion from that his biographer alleges. Nor have I scrupled to use Mr. Sutherland's very words, when they were fit and sufficient for my purpose. My debt to him is easily traceable throughout the first two sections of the 'Introduction', though from its very greatness I have not been able always to indicate it by quotation-marks. Mr. Turner has willingly and generously placed the book at my disposal for this purpose.

I have had, however, the inestimable advantage of conferring with Mr. George Gordon McCrae, the veteran Victorian poet, one of Lindsay Gordon's chief friends, from whom Mr. Sutherland drew the larger part of the facts in his book, and so I have done what in me lay to verify the story as Mr. Sutherland told it. I have also drawn largely from a long and interesting interview with Mrs. Peter Low, of Canniwigra Station, South Australia—Gordon's widow, published in the Adelaide *Advertiser* of March 23 this year; and to Sir Langdon Bonython, the proprietor of that journal, for his permission to quote therefrom, and to Mr. C. R. Wilton, leader of the staff, who wrote the article, I am deeply grateful. Miss Edith Humphris's article on 'The Youth of Adam Lindsay Gordon', in the *Lone Hand Magazine* for August 1910, has also been laid under substantial contribution in dealing with the poet's early years. To the proprietors of the magazine, and to the authoress for courteously permitting me to quote from her paper, I am much indebted. I think, moreover, I can also claim to have read nearly, if not quite, all the magazine and newspaper articles on the poet, and unconsciously I doubtless am debtor to these also.

Mr. J. Howlett-Ross's *Laureate of the Centaurs*, (Samuel J. Mullen, 1888), which is now also out of print, but of which Mr. Howlett-Ross projects an early second edition, has supplied me with some information lacking in Sutherland of which I have gratefully

made use. The Hon. Sir Frank Madden, M. L. A., Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria, a close personal friend of Gordon's, who rode many steeplechases against him, and who in fact walked as far as St. Kilda with the poet, the night immediately preceding his death; Mr. James Moloney, solicitor of Melbourne, another intimate friend of Gordon; Mr. George Gordon McCrae, a fellow member of his in the 'Yorick' Club, and Mr. William Trainor, the first close friend he made in Australia, have all afforded me the opportunity of including their personal reminiscences of him whom they all loved, and in this way given me matter not appearing in print before. Mrs. Marcus Clarke, the widow of the distinguished novelist, has graciously accorded me leave to incorporate her husband's magnificent prose poem on 'The Dominant Note of Australian Scenery', from his 'Memorial Volume', in my estimate of Gordon's debt to Australia. To all these I express my sincere thanks.

Thanks are also due to Messrs. Wilson & MacKinnon of the *Argus* and the *Australasian*, for permission to include Kendall's poem 'In Memoriam A. L. Gordon' appearing in Appendix II: to Messrs. George Robertson & Company Proprietary Limited, to Mr. Douglas Sladen and to Mr. J. Howlett-Ross, for permission to include, in Appendix I, poems of Gordon not hitherto appearing in his collected works; and no less to Mr. J. H. Taylor, Town Clerk of Brighton, for giving me a copy of

Gordon's almost unknown poem 'Argemone', written for Miss Riddoch's album in 1869, interesting not only for its indications of the melancholy deepening in him at that time into despair, but also for its throb of inextinguishable passion and desire after that first love of his life, whom in his ignorance of the real facts he evidently believed had preceded him 'through the portal of the grave'.

One word more. The excursus on Gordon's debt to Browning has its source in my memory of a short paper read by Mr. John (now the Rev. Dr.) Kelman of Edinburgh to an Ormond College Browning Society, of which he and I were members, and afterwards printed in the University Magazine, to which brief essay we both contributed some of the instances of the many striking resemblances between the two poets. Although I have some notes of that paper, and a small fragment of it in my possession, I do not really know the exact extent of my indebtedness to him, either in thought or language; but I make ready and grateful acknowledgement of it, the more, as even to write his name in this Preface raises in me unforgettable memories of the grace of a day that is dead, and of a friendship fragrant and formative during those *dies albae* of University and College life.

In conclusion, we in Australia read Gordon; we do not pedestal him into the highest, or even into a very high place; we love him and his verse; and love is given to a man and a poet and a book, not

for the things that the world knows and names, but for the ' novel silver lights and darks undreamed of ', and for ' that which the world's coarse thumb and finger failed to plumb '. You cannot explain or analyse or weigh or ticket such love.

I regret, and no one will ever be more conscious than I am of, the inadequacies and imperfections of this tribute to his memory, written as it has been amid a particularly strenuous period of a not idle life ; ' there may or may not lurk a pearl beneath ' its surface, but love lies in it anyhow ; and by the public—if not by the critics—' he who loves much is forgiven much '. Gordon in any case may gain another understanding reader or two, and that will be all the better—for the reader ; and at the same time the guerdon of the writer.

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April 20, 1912.

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INTRODUCTION

I. GORDON IN ENGLAND

Adam Lindsay Gordon, the most striking, and in some respects, the greatest and most typical of our Australian poets, though English by birth and education —and in manners and sentiment, as one of his friends puts it, 'English of the English'—was descended from a Scottish family which could trace its pedigree far back into the dim and distant past.

The earliest ancestor, however, of whom we have any knowledge, and the real founder of the poet's house, was a certain Robert Gordon, who early in the eighteenth century, as so many Scotsmen had done before him, left his native land and settled in France, where, in partnership with another, he embarked in a large wine and spirit business. He and his partner seem to have had branches of their establishment both in Bordeaux and Boulogne, and Robert Gordon evidently amassed a considerable fortune. For about thirty years he remained a domiciled Frenchman, and it was not until the middle of the century that he returned to Scotland, determined in an ambition to found a landed family, which was curiously enough to bring such trouble and disaster on that distant descendant of his who, as mounted policeman, horsebreaker, landowner, member of the South Australian Parliament, livery stable-keeper, trainer and rider of racehorses,—and above all as a poet, —was to seek his fortune a hundred years later in a land that to Robert Gordon can have been little more than a name. 'The courtly old gentleman,' as Mr. Sutherland

puts it, ' bewigged and powdered, and more than a little French in manner ', invested in the landed estate known as the Barony of Esslemont, which he straightway entailed upon his eldest male heir. All his sons apparently were more than ordinarily successful and capable men. Certainly they were not of that class ' which never makes money but always marries it ', but they do seem for the most part to have had a faculty of managing in the choice of their wives to ' goa wheer money is '.

One of them, near the end of the eighteenth century, had, in order to push his fortune, settled in England. He in turn bought the ample estate of ' Greenhill ', near Worcester, a purchase which he owed in part at least to his wife's dowry. There he became a prosperous squire with a numerous family of boys, who, in the Church, the Navy, and the Army, carried on worthily the traditions of the family. In the latter profession, two of the sons attained the rank of captain. One of these was Adam Durnford Gordon, the poet's father. He seems not only to have reached a certain eminence in his official career but to have been a noted pig-sticker, tent-pegger, and sportsman. The tie that existed between this daring father, and equally daring—if not reckless—son, in spite of all the happenings of the years was never broken. More than twelve years after he had last seen that father, Gordon wrote in 1865 :

I remember some words my father said,
When I was an urchin vain ;—
God rest his soul, in his narrow bed
These ten long years he hath lain.
When I think one drop of the blood he bore
This faint heart surely must hold,
It may be my fancy and nothing more,
But the faint heart seemeth bold.

He said that as from the blood of grape,
Or from juice distilled from the grain,
False vigour, soon to evaporate,
Is lent to nerve and brain,
So the coward will dare on the gallant horse
What he never would dare alone,
Because he exults in a borrowed force,
And a hardihood not his own.

Long years afterwards Lindsay used fondly to recall, with faltering voice and gleaming eye and animated gesticulation, the story of his father's career in India. Writing in 1868, he says:

'There may be men living in India at this moment who remember a certain officer of irregular cavalry; this man, furnished with a common boar spear, and a sharp sabre, but with no firearms, and mounted on his favourite horse (probably not a pure Arab, but one of the purest of that breed that could be obtained in Hindustan), used to kill tigers single-handed on open ground.'

Again, in 'Whisperings in Wattle Boughs', he says:

Oh, tell me, father mine, ere the good ship cross'd the brine,
On the gangway one mute hand-grip we exchanged,
Do you, past the grave, employ, for your stubborn reckless boy,
Those petitions that in life were ne'er estranged?

Very fragmentary, however, is our knowledge of this same Captain Gordon, for his son Lindsay maintained a stubborn and almost impenetrable reserve and reticence regarding his parents and his early life. Even to Marcus Clarke and others of his particular

friends in Australia, he would breathe no word regarding his life at home.

In the early part of 1815, however, before the time when the escape of Napoleon from Elba was known, Adam Durnford Gordon left his home in Worcester as an ensign, to join at Portsmouth the troopship which was to carry his regiment to the Barbadoes. There is still in existence a letter (four pages of old-fashioned quarto) in which the cadet reveals to his mother the mighty hopes and ambitions that stirred his heart, as he looked out from the port-holes of the ship ere she started on her voyage. For ten years he almost disappears from our ken, until in 1825 we find him no longer in the regular army, but with a commission in the Bengal Cavalry of the East India Company. He is said to have seen active service, presumably in the first Burmese War, but we do not come on authentic information until we find him in the latter end of that year invalided home to England. There is some presumption that, in addition to his ill-health, he had been wounded, for, though still less than thirty years old, he was in receipt of a pension from the Company. The interesting young invalid fell in love with his cousin, Miss Harriet Elizabeth Gordon, who, in addition to her other attractions, had a fortune of £20,000 settled upon herself, and invested in $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent consols—another piece of financial business which was fraught with unforeseen consequences to her son. On the captain's pension, and the interest on this money of Mrs. Gordon's, the family seem to have lived in quiet ease and comfort. Not much, however, is traceable at the present day of their life in Cheltenham at that period.

After the birth of her two daughters, Mrs. Gordon showed the first symptoms of that religious mania which afterwards showed itself in such tragic form in her son.

and the significance of that in all his after-life will not be under-estimated by those who read the story of his life and his verses with a seeing eye, and who have learned to appreciate the meaning of the word heredity. This was the poet's *damnosa haereditas*, and it should be borne in mind when we find in his work some diminution of that splendid sanity which marks our greatest poets. From the cradle Gordon was haunted by that hereditary weakness and despondency which jaundiced his outlook on life, and which his own numerous falls on the hunting-field and in the bush doubtless deepened and accelerated. It was really in the hope of restoring her mental ill-health that the family soon afterwards migrated to Fayal, that middle island of the Azores group whose best memory for Englishmen is the fight of the little *Revenge*. It was here in 1833 that Adam Lindsay was born. The change of climate, however, did not work the anticipated change, and we find the Gordons leaving their roomy and quaintly furnished house amidst its vineyards for Madeira. They afterwards came back to England, but the gloom never again quite lifted from their home.

The scenery of the Azores forms an interesting frame-work for the development of the child's mind. The whole island of Fayal is less than six miles long, and from the window of the Gordons' house, set as it was on a hill, its undulating vineyards, and its groves of myrtles and orange trees, half revealing and half concealing the white walls of the Spanish cottages, can be plainly seen. Again and again in his letters Captain Gordon bursts forth in praise of the land in which his lot was temporarily cast. In one he says, 'The distant hills and valleys seem to me like a blessed region of holiness, never blighted by frosts nor withered by the fervid sunbeam, but fragrant with verdant pasture and everlasting roses.'

It was in this tropic and luxurious home and natural environment that the bright little boy passed his earliest years, looking out through nursery windows that overlooked the naked broken cliffs, and with the murmurous splash of the encircling ocean ever in his ears.

At three years old we get from his father's letters this passing glimpse of him:

'A sweet little fellow he is; indeed, I think him almost too pretty. Very slight and upright, carrying his little curly head well back, and almost swaggering along. He talks with a sweet, full, laughing voice, and a face dimpled and bright as the morning. He is seen here, perhaps, to too great an advantage, in very light clothing, scampering amid the large and airy playrooms. We have just finished the joyous vintage, after a summer of extraordinary beauty, and the delicious baskets of grapes have rained upon us for these two months.'

Yet across the sunshine of those three young happy lives there had already arisen the cloud, no larger than a man's hand, which was to darken all their sky, and end for the boy Lindsay on that bleak winter morning at Brighton Beach, when a bullet from his own rifle put an end to a misery no longer tolerable. The deadly taint was already at work in that sunbathed home, and over all their heads 'a doom that ever poised itself to fall'. The futility of these changes of scene, entered on for the mother's sake, was at last realised, and the educational needs of the children beginning to be felt, in 1840 they finally returned and took up their abode in the neighbourhood of their friends in the west of England.

Lindsay, then seven years old, tasted for the first time the delights of boyish comradeship, and was happy in the fishing excursions and long rambles which he took in Gloucestershire, or by the banks of the river Severn which flowed five miles away. The following year—1841—he entered Cheltenham College as a day boy, and

displayed some of those characteristic traits of his nature which made him in after years a marked man among his fellows. Subject to fits of reckless energy, sometimes of courage, sometimes of defiance, he never did anything by halves, and once the impulse was on him, stuck at no escapade however wild or culpable. During these few years he developed his taste for horsemanship, and became noted amongst his schoolfellows for his facility in turning rhymes—some descriptive of schoolboys' sports, others, it must be confessed, lampooning sketches of teachers who incurred his wrath. He also became an adept in the art of boxing, and though even in those early years he was very short-sighted, his long reach gave him an advantage he was not slow to turn to account. His name does not appear, though those of his cousins do again and again, on the honour records and prize-lists of Cheltenham College, and perhaps the only legacy which he took away of a purely academic nature was a great love for Latin and Greek literature. The poetry of the former tongue especially he could recite with wonderful facility, and at interminable length.

One of his Melbourne friends, Mr. James Moloney, the well-known solicitor, remembers an amusing exhibition of this power of Gordon. On a certain afternoon towards the end of his life, when the poet was living in Brighton, he, Walter Montgomery (the Shakespearian actor and reciter), Marcus Clarke, and Mr. Moloney, rode down together across what was then the Elwood Swamp to the seaside suburb. It remains for Mr. Moloney an unforgettable day by virtue of two facts; first, the romantic rhetoric which poured unceasingly from the lips of Marcus Clarke on all subjects in heaven and earth and the waters under the earth, broken at frequent intervals by the declamations of Montgomery of relevant or irrelevant passages from Shakespeare; and secondly,

by the contribution of Gordon to the wild symposium. Mounted on a little pony, his legs almost touching the ground, Gordon raced it at every obstacle that could be construed into a jump, and then darted back to the other three, firing off long quotations from his favourite Latin authors, the jaunt thus begun not ending till the ' wee sma' 'oors ' in the poet's house at Brighton.

Various stories and legends as to his adventures have been attributed to this period in Gordon's life—many of them, doubtless, on good grounds, for certainly his name was erased from the list of pupils at Cheltenham for insubordination and other acts as blameworthy. An impressionable and enthusiastic youth, the companion of jockeys, horse-trainers, livery stable-keepers, and prize-fighters, Gordon could scarcely escape sooner or later being thrown into the vortex of a life so full of that temptation and danger which he loved, for as he himself says :

> No game was ever yet worth a rap
> For a rational man to play,
> Into which no accident, no mishap,
> Could possibly find its way.

He admitted in after years that he had been expelled from another public school for absenting himself in order to ride in a steeplechase. His father, who was himself the soul of honour, and trusted the sense of honour in his son—and no one ever had a keener sense of honour than Adam Lindsay Gordon—found that the sense of honour is not all that is necessary to keep a boy straight, and by this time his mother seems to have lost whatever control she once had over him. Her malady at this time had her in its deathly grip. She seems to have shut herself up in her room for days bewailing her son's wickedness, accusing herself for his

lack of control, and penning long rambling prayers for her errant boy ; sometimes, indeed, fasting until food had to be forcibly given to her. It is of her that Gordon writes :

> My mother is a stately dame,
> Who oft would chide with me ;
> She saith my riot bringeth shame,
> And stains my pedigree.

Captain Gordon, with his knowledge of Hindustani, was appointed in 1844 to the position of Professor of Oriental languages at Cheltenham College, where his son Lindsay had been three years already enrolled as a scholar. The Directors' idea seems to have been to add to the institution a department which should aim at the preparation of youths for the Indian service, and Captain Gordon with his love of languages seemed admirably equipped for the superintendence of such a venture.

At the age of fifteen Lindsay seems to have been little else than a sportsman, delighting more in

> The stimulant which the horseman feels,
> When he gallops fast and straight,

than in anything that College dons or books could teach him. His riding-master at Cheltenham was George Reeves, and on the slopes of the Cotswold Hills he loved to indulge his passion for the hunt. As he puts it in ' By Flood and Field ' :

> I remember the lowering wintry morn,
> And the mist on the Cotswold hills,
> Where I once heard the blast of the huntsman's horn,
> Not far from the seven rills.
> Jack Esdale was there, and Hugh St. Clair,
> Bob Chapman and Andrew Kerr,
> And big George Griffiths on Devil-May-Care,
> And—black Tom Oliver.

As far as it is possible to identify the names in this verse with actual personages, they seem to have been a somewhat wild and lawless crew. Gordon himself described them thus in 'Ye Wearie Wayfarer':

They were men for the most part rough and rude,
  Dull and illiterate,
But they nursed no quarrel, they cherished no feud,
  They were strangers to spite and hate;
In a kindly spirit they took their stand,
  That brothers and sons might learn
How a man should uphold the sports of his land,
And strike his best with a strong right hand,
  And take his strokes in return.

Gordon was not conspicuous during his school life for industry or scholastic attainments, though he was apt enough: but he was not a little beloved by his comrades for his generous defence and assistance of 'the weaker brethren' amongst them. Here, however, he learned that love for poetry, especially the classic poetry of Greece and Rome, which was always noted as a feature in the conversation of Gordon. One intimate friend in Australia declared that 'no man formed his taste for literature so completely upon classical models, though certainly one would not gather this from his writings'. Gordon once told this same friend that he had not learned much Greek at school, and that the most of what he had read was since he had lived in the Australian bush. The picture of Gordon poring over a book by the aid of a pannican-lamp, his long nose brushing the page as he held it close to his short-sighted eyes, is one that recurs to the memory of all his friends. The heroic movement of the Homeric verse, as well as that of Virgil, was especially attractive to him, but Ovid and Horace were his chief favourites. The only two translations that

Gordon made among his printed poems were, one from the French of Alfred de Musset, and one of Horace's ode 'Pastor Cum'. On his long and lonely rides he invariably carried a Latin classic in his pocket, and so good was the use he made of it that it very soon became dilapidated. It did not matter whether the copy had been borrowed, or was his own; in the former case, when returning the book, he used to say 'that he felt like one apologizing for knocking-up a borrowed horse by over-riding'.

It is said that there is no record of Gordon's expulsion from Cheltenham College, and Mr. Sladen[1] tells us that he has the authority of Mr. A. A. Hunter, Bursar of the College, who has examined the archives carefully, for that statement. One can readily believe, however, that without a formal expulsion, Captain Gordon felt his son's presence as a serious hindrance to the school, and was not altogether sorry to remove him. It is possible that the expulsion which he himself admitted—if not a mere piece of *braggadocio*—may have taken place sometime between 1842, when he left the College the first time, and 1851, when his name was restored to the books. The College authorities do not seem to know when he finally made his exit, though we do know that he sailed for Australia on August 7, 1853.

His first choice of a profession was for the Army. One of his uncles was a Colonel of Artillery, one a Major, and one a Post-Captain in the Navy. The family traditions contain many records of the military services of its members, and Lindsay was sent to Woolwich Academy, to learn the scientific part of his profession. He left there without obtaining a commission, for,

[1] In *Adam Lindsay Gordon and his Friends in England and Australia*, by Edith Humphris and Douglas Sladen. (Constable & Co., 1912.)

unfortunately, he had carried with him habits which were more conducive to his pre-eminence in sport than in pure learning. Neither mathematics nor the mystery of fortification had any attraction for him compared to the joys of the boxing ring. During the latter part of his stay at Cheltenham, he had been taking lessons from 'Jem Edwards', the West of England boxer. At Woolwich he had the tuition of Tom Sayers, afterwards the pugilist hero of England. With such instructors, the apt pupil soon began to operate on his own account, and gave such vigorous and convincing accounts of himself as caused him to be regarded with respect as an expert in the science of hitting, stopping, jobbing, and getting away safe, for we read 'he was a determined stayer, and a glutton for taking punishment, and delivered his blows straight from the shoulder like a veritable pile-driver's'. The fame which followed these doughty deeds seems to have been the last straw that brought about his undoing, for he was 'scratched for all his engagements' as far as the Army was concerned.

It was then thought that as he was too wild for the Army, he might succeed in the Church, but here again 'the old Adam' proved too strong, and he was a more regular attendant at the country race-meetings than at lectures. To the scandal of his uncles and cousins he even sometimes rode a steeplechase himself. Meanwhile his favourite sister Ada had died, and his mother's case was growing ever more hopeless. She seemed to have 'taken a scunner' at the high-spirited youth, and doubtless the father's sympathetic temper was being sorely tested. Mr. Sutherland tells us that on one occasion when a friend of Lindsay's had got himself into trouble, he undertook to get from his father at Cheltenham the sum necessary to prevent an exposure. For this purpose he journeyed home, but found his father was absent for

a few days. Believing that he would readily have granted the £10 or £12 necessary, the case being desperate, and knowing the uselessness of applying to his mother, he took from his father's library a considerable number of volumes and sold them to raise the money. Few fathers, especially those whose tastes run to books, could regard such cavalier treatment of their treasures with equanimity.

There are other stories of a similar nature which may be true, or may not, but they are all confirmatory of the sort of reputation that he was earning in those days. He was held to be a madcap, reckless boy, unballasted and eccentric, yet all his wildness transfigured by generosity and high spirits, and following ever the 'gleam' of some high and unattainable ideal. Letters of his are in existence, in which he laments these wild and wasted years, and curiously has to add to his regrets some mournful excesses in the matter of wine —curiously, for that was not a weakness of his in later years. Mr. George Gordon McCrae says, indeed, it was often a matter for comment amongst his fellow members of the 'Yorick' Club that Gordon was so abstemious. He himself asked the poet the reason why, and Gordon's only reply was to take the little finger of Mr. McCrae's right hand and lay it in a deep cleft near the back of his skull—one of the many scars that he bore in his body in token of his numerous falls on the hunting field. But in fact Gordon's vices (so called) were allied throughout his life to an instinctive and innate gentleness, which made him in all his later years bear himself as a chivalrous gentleman, especially in the presence of women; hence we may conclude that his indulgence in wine and the entanglements with women to which he alludes in his letters, went to no great length, and surely they may well lie forgotten on the lowest steps of youth.

At this time there came into Gordon's life—with its tendency

> Not only to keep down the base in man,
> But teach high thought and amiable words,
> And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
> And love of truth, and all that makes a man—

the expulsive and constraining power of his 'maiden passion for a maid'. Dancing and flirting in furious fashion amongst the rosy-cheeked belles of the village he came on one, the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, who wakened in him the wonder and wild desire of a first love. The poem called 'No Name', which he wrote long afterwards, we must regard as a piece of autobiography:

> You in your beauty above me bent
> In the pause of a wild west country ball—
> Spoke to me—touched me without intent—
> Made me your servant for once and all.
>
> Light laughter rippled your rose-red lip,
> And you swept my cheek with a shining curl,
> That stray'd from your shoulder's snowy tip—
> Now I pray that your sleep is a sound one, girl!

The last line is spoken in a dramatic quality, for the lady long survived her youthful and ardent lover, and her death as a matter of fact occurred only quite recently. She married, some years after Gordon had left England, an excellent husband who, strange to say, earned a local reputation as a poet, but more still, as a man of scientific attainment. She led a long and happy life, and retained until the end a vivid recollection of the young poet, who had loved her so passionately and impetuously half a century before. The whole story of the episode from her point of view has been committed

to writing by herself, and is now, with her photograph, in the possession of Mr. J. Howlett-Ross, the author of the earliest memoir on Gordon, entitled *The Laureate of the Centaurs*, who will have an exceedingly interesting story to unfold when he publishes his projected second edition of that book.

From Gordon's point of view, the story may be summarized thus : his parents, as parents will, received an inkling at a very early stage of his passion, as to why his horse's head was so often turned along the road that led to that particular farm, and his mother especially seems to have taken violent offence at the prospect thus opening before her son. The girl in question was well educated and blameless, but the pride of race was strong in Mrs. Gordon, and she set her face against a marriage for her son with one not in the 'set' which military officers, College teachers, the clergy, and invalid old dowagers at Cheltenham thought was the only circle in which they might mingle without loss of caste. The headstrong Lindsay, now nineteen, seems to have welcomed, as so many other youths have done in similar circumstances,—or, at any rate, to have resolved to breast—the torrent of opposition at home, and day after day found him still headed towards the farm-house, talking with the farmer in order to win a few words from the daughter, who was doubtless flattered by her handsome suitor's attention. Unfortunately, the farmer had more serious grounds than the rather snobbish Mrs. Gordon had for objecting to the alliance of his daughter with one whose name and fame were not above reproach in the neighbourhood, and who, at the very time when he might have been studying the things that made for ingratiating himself in the farmer's favour, was penning such lines as those entitled 'A Hunting Song'. It may not be well to take poets too much at

their own valuation, but at least the farmer seems to have been somewhat troubled by these reports about his would-be son-in-law. A young fellow with excellent prospects, neglecting his college work for every race-meeting in the whole countryside, with a reputation for eccentricity and unsteadiness, and with relatives who strenuously objected to the match, was scarcely an eligible *parti*, and the girl seems to have given him diminished encouragement, until at last suddenly they stood face to face with the inevitable crisis of choice.

As a way out of the scrapes into which Gordon had come the proposition had been made that he should ship himself off to Australia. It was in the early part of 1853; the gold-fields of Ballarat and Mount Alexander had brought dazzling visions of easily attainable wealth before the eyes of English parents, and the prospect was not without its allurement for one so impressionable as the youthful Lindsay Gordon. Whatever else he was, says Mr. Sladen, he was courageous, romantic, and adventurous, and his cousin says that the burden of his cry at this time was, 'Australia is the place for me.' If he were to go, however, he determined first to put all to the hazard. He would visit the farm-house, make his proposal, and if accepted would defy his parents and carve out his own career; if not, what was there to keep him at home? Imagination readily supplies what happened. The picture of the generous and honourable, but reckless and uncontrollable youth dashing out in the lovers' month of May, to put into hot hungry words the passion that he felt, and of the maiden steadfastly refusing—not perhaps without misgiving and tears, when she learned that his exile was to be the consequence of her refusal—may be left to the imagination of the reader. This event closed the first chapter in the life of Adam Lindsay Gordon. In the extremity of his

thwarted desire, he wrote the lines 'To my Sister', on August 4, 1853, three days before he sailed for Australia:

I loved a girl not long ago,
And, till my suit was told,
I thought her breast as fair as snow,
'Twas very near as cold;
And yet I spoke, with feelings more
Of recklessness than pain,
Those words I never spoke before,
Nor never shall again.

Her cheek grew pale, in her dark eye
I saw the tear-drop shine;
Her red lips faltered in reply,
And then were pressed to mine.
A quick pulsation of the heart!
A flutter of the breath!
A smothered sob—and thus we part,
To meet no more till death.

Gordon had now played for his stake—and lost it. In the mood engendered by his love's refusal, he was ready to accept the suggestion that he should seek 'fresh woods and pastures new' in Australia. The barque *Julia* of 520 tons was lying in St. Katherine's Docks at London, and Gordon's passage was taken in her and all preparation made for his departure. His father was the strongest link that bound him to England. His regret at leaving his mother seems to have been tempered by her narrow and melancholic attitude towards himself. Of his two sisters, Ada had died a year or two before, and the other, Ignez, had, with some of the Gordon self-will, engaged herself to a young Italian named Ratti, whom Lindsay—and indeed the whole

family—detested. She would shortly be taken, this dark-eyed beauty born in Madeira, to Nice—by one of whom Lindsay disapproved (never again did he have word or token of her), and there was nothing except the tie that bound him to his father to make him wish to stay in England. The lines that he wrote 'To my Sister', three days before he sailed, express the feelings of his torn and troubled heart. He had evidently, in view of his coming exile, made a pilgrimage to his sister's grave, and as he stood, still barely twenty years old, with his father's hand in his, on the gangway of the ship, on August 7, 1853, he was making an utter break with the stormy and gloomy past. Resentment and bitterness against those who could so easily cast him off was in his heart; and doubtless his father, as he turned his back on the ship, compared the promise of the dawn of his boy's life in the Azores, with the tarnished reputation of the youth now on his way to Adelaide.

II. GORDON IN AUSTRALIA

The *Julia* berthed in Port Adelaide on November 14, 1853. The long voyage gave the pensive and unsociable youth—who loved to leave the company of his fellow passengers and lie out on the bowsprit watching the panorama of sea and land and sky—much opportunity for introspection and memory and morbid brooding. He realized his own folly—but in this, as in other things, Kismet and Circumstances were his final philosophy of life:

> Things were to have been, and therefore
> They were, and they are to be.

Or, as with his keen self-analysis he put it in fuller form in his 'Thick-headed Thoughts':

I've something of the bull-dog in my breed,
The spaniel is developed somewhat less;
While life is in me I can fight and bleed,
But never the chastising hand caress.
You say the stroke was well intended. 'True.'
You mention 'It was meant to do me good'.
'That may be.' 'You deserve it.' 'Granted, too.'
'Then take it kindly.' 'No—I never could.'

Gordon was no favourite on board. His taciturn and reserved demeanour cut him off here as in all his after-life from making friends readily. Mr. James Moloney says, 'He was really a very uninteresting man. He had no small talk, and except for the fluency with which he could quote Latin verses, seldom or never contributed much to social gatherings. There was in him, too,' he adds, 'something that can only be designated "snobbishness". In Australia, "the hot sun" of prosperity "never brought the adder forth", but one could easily realize that, "English of the English" as he was, he at heart was imbued with exclusive, aristocratic, and anti-social ideas.' Like his friend Marcus Clarke, there was in him something that revolted from contact with the 'many-headed beast', and it was very rarely indeed that Gordon laid aside this hauteur and class-consciousness. In the Australia in which he lived there was of course no place for it, but it showed itself in his almost fastidious manners at table and before women, and in his desire to escape from those whom he regarded as socially his inferiors by birth, in order to take refuge with those who laid no claim to be regarded as his equals. 'For that reason,' says Mr. Moloney—and Mr. McCrae is in cordial agreement with him—'Gordon always seemed more at home among the horse-trainers, stableboys, and jockeys, than he was in the drawing-

room.' In a lady's album on board the *Julia* he wrote those lines which are now included in his works as 'An Exile's Farewell'.

On his arrival in South Australia, with the independence which characterized all his actions through life, Gordon made little or no use of the letters of introduction which his uncles and cousins had given him to Sir Henry Young, the Governor, and other people of influence in the Colony. He would not be beholden to any one who might possibly have regarded him as a disgrace and shame to his family.

Three days after his arrival, he applied to be admitted into the mounted police force of South Australia. The free life, the good horse, the spice of danger, all lent a charm to the trooper's occupation which Gordon found too tempting to resist. He was immediately accepted. In 1852 South Australia had lost much of her population in the rush to the gold-fields in Victoria, and she had had to resort to severe retrenchment, which was at that moment visible in her reduced police force. The reaction, however, had set in, and Gordon's application came at a time when the Government was recruiting its diminished numbers. So on the ninth day after his landing he was astride a good horse, with his face turned towards the south-east district of the Colony, having escaped the usual training, partly because of his skill as a rider, and partly because there was urgent need of constables in this district of the Colony. Doubtless some of his experiences at this time live in such poems as 'Wolf and Hounds', and 'From the Wreck'. Mr. Sutherland thinks that the belief that Gordon rode in the armed gold escort between Mount Alexander and Adelaide, and the circumstantial accounts that have been circulated of his adventures therein, are of imagination all compact, for the gold escort was discontinued about a month

after Gordon landed in Australia, and his name is not known in the official records. He seems almost at once to have gone to take charge of the Mount Gambier station, dwelling in a little cottage of stone, riding abroad by day and night, tall, and, as his photographs prove, beardless at that time, slightly stooping by reason of his defective eyesight, but a practised horseman.

In later years he used to tell an exciting story of those days, of which Mr. Sutherland gives the following account:

'He had been directed to conduct a lunatic to the nearest asylum, two hundred miles away. The madman was mounted on a young half-broken colt. The trooper, with his pistols and loaded carbine strapped to the saddle, curveted along on his excellent horse. At night they slept in the open air beneath the handiest tree, Gordon fastening his prisoner's hand to his own with the handcuffs, as the surest way of keeping him secure. The lunatic was very restless, and Gordon's long day was followed by a sleepless night. Once or twice, after being awakened for the twentieth time, he uttered some awful threats in order to quieten his crazy charge, but in the morning the madman had a chance of turning the tables. Gordon with thoughtless good humour set the man on his own excellent horse, while he himself cantered on in front upon the half-broken beast. But he had forgotten all about the loaded carbine in the saddle, and ere they had gone half a mile he had a sudden reminder in the shape of a bullet that whistled past him. Facing round, he became aware of the situation. The two were alone in the wilderness, and though he might have the advantage in sanity, the other had all the arms, and had, besides, the memory of that midnight score to wipe off. It was a trying juncture, and it required all Gordon's persuasiveness to get out of it.'

It was during this period that Gordon saved the life of a poor German, who, with his wife and two children, was working his way to the Bendigo gold-fields. The man

lost himself in the bush, where he had gone to cut a pole for his dray. He was away for twelve days in all before Gordon succeeded in carrying eight miles to Scott's Tatiara Station the poor bundle of skin and bones he had discovered. The immediate cause of his resignation seems to have been the result of resentment at some piece of officiousness on the part of his superior officer, who had called upon the trooper to 'shine' his boots for him. Gordon flung the boots at the arrogant sergeant, and immediately resigned his position, on November 8, 1855. It was during this period that he first met William Trainor, with whom he struck up such a firm and intimate friendship. Gordon and a certain sergeant of police were on duty at a travelling circus at which it was Trainor's business at a given moment to enter as a drunken man. His acting of the part must have been most realistic, for the sergeant arrested him and gave him into Gordon's charge to convey to the lock-up. Trainor protested to the tall trooper that he 'was only play-acting', but, with the usual obduracy of policemen, Gordon refused to listen to him: and it was not until they had reached the watch-house that Trainor, pulling aside his outer garments, revealed to the now-convinced trooper the blue star-spangled tights of the clown next his skin. Trainor still remembers Gordon's hearty, roof-shaking laugh, 'the most musical laugh,' he adds, 'I ever heard.'

In view of the growing trade for horses in the Indian market, Gordon, who was now two-and-twenty, next set up in business as a horse-breaker—a business specially dangerous to him on account of his short-sightedness, and which entailed on him some of the first of that 'Iliad of Woes' in the shape of tumbles and accidents which he was afterwards able to chronicle. On one occasion he made an attempt to leap over a rail

to which horses were tethered at the Penola Hotel, but as he was peering over the horse's head—and he told Mr. Moloney long afterwards that he 'never saw beyond his horse's ears'—to look for the rail, the animal jumped clear from under him. Often, too, in his wild gallops through the bush, he was knocked out of his saddle by the branches of trees, and sometimes was even rendered unconscious by the force of the collision. At Penola, Gordon had made the acquaintance, in rather a peculiar fashion, of a boy who became famous afterwards as one of Australia's best jockeys—'Tommy' Hales. It was curiously enough some piece of boyish mischief in which 'Tommy' had become entangled, so as to bring himself within the reach of the arm of the law, that made Gordon, doubtless still remembering his own wild doings, so sympathetic that he released the boy, while he was being conveyed to the lock-up for safety. Gordon's first horse-breaking engagement was at Lake Hawdon, on Guichen Bay, owned by Mr. Edward Stockdale. He met 'Tommy' Hales there after a long absence again, but more important is the fact that it was while he was in Mr. Stockdale's employ that Gordon made the acquaintance of the Rev. Julian Tenison Woods, a large-hearted, sympathetic, and genial priest, with whom Gordon became very friendly. He was much impressed by the extraordinary character and intellectual superiority of the externally unpolished horse-breaker, and by his wide knowledge of classical Greek, Latin, French, and English authors. Especially he found him passionately fond of poetry, and delighted at having an opportunity of reciting his favourite passages to sympathetic ears. Gordon's elocution was defective—one friend declaring that the poet's recitations made him laugh outright, they were so sing-song and monotonous. In the first conversation, however, when the priest referred to Homer, he

found that his companion could repeat more than one passage in the original. Drawing him out a little, he discovered that this lanky bushman could recite with equal fervour scenes from Ovid and others from Virgil. Slyly testing further his capabilities, Father Woods had him before long reciting Racine and Corneille with much freedom in French, but with an accent unknown in Paris. The priest had a fairly good library, and this proved a veritable godsend to the poet. He carried a certain pocket Horace for months in his jumper breast, until he knew by heart most of the Odes, and the whole of the *de Arte Poetica*.

Near his permanent home, about four miles from Mount Gambier, which was a hut of two rooms, he found opportunity for cultivating the first intimate friendship he made in Australia, that with Mr. William Trainor, who having left the circus was now of the same occupation as himself, and who, recognizing Gordon's superiority in that literary knowledge and power in which he himself, though sadly deficient, was deeply interested, became for ever afterwards a kind of Boswell to Gordon's Johnson. There they worked and smoked and chatted in winter from their respective beds. There they read Scott and Dickens, Kingsley and Mayne Reid, and, best beloved of all, Whyte-Melville, to whom Gordon afterwards dedicated his *Bush Ballads*, and whom he always regarded with a kind of hero-worship. He seems at this time to have written little or nothing himself, and apparently he was not even reading any poetry, for the only book of verses he possessed was Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, which he read and re-read until he held them all tenaciously by heart ; and it was not until he got access to the Rev. J. T. Woods's library that he again really touched and mingled with the world of letters. Trainor lived with him for some eight or ten years, and

he says, 'There was something so generous and noble about him, he was so upright and conscientious amid all the whims of his most peculiar nature, that I felt him to be of a stamp quite superior to the men around him, and the closer our acquaintance grew, the deeper became my feelings of respect and admiration.'

It was towards the end of this time that Gordon's itch for writing verses himself seems to have revived, and often as they rode his companion would see Gordon halting his horse under the shade of some tree, casting his leg over the pommel of his saddle for a desk and writing, oblivious to all the surroundings in which he stood. At such times conversation with him was altogether one-sided, for he was deaf and mute while the inspiration held him. Many a Sunday he rode off alone to the neighbouring coast near the cliffs of Cape Northumberland, where he saw

Only the crag and the cliff to nor'ward,
And the rocks receding, and reefs flung forward,
And waifs wreck'd seaward and wasted shoreward
On shallows sheeted with flaming foam.

A grim, grey coast and a seaboard ghastly,
And shores trod seldom by feet of men—
Where the batter'd hull and the broken mast lie,
They have lain embedded these long years ten.

The joys of horse-racing and horse-breaking were also his at that time, and at every meeting, both on the South Australian and Victorian side of the border, he generally contrived to be present. He seemed indeed to have travelled all over the south-east with his race-horses. Mr. David Mack, caretaker of the Government offices, relates that when he entered the mounted police, thirty years ago, Sergeant Campbell, who was then in charge of the Adelaide barracks, and who was a comrade

of Gordon's when he joined the police force, told him that the poet was the most fearless horseman he had ever seen. Indeed, his daring and skill began to give him a certain local fame among those of horsy tastes. 'When he was given a summons to deliver,' says Mr. Mack, 'or a warrant to serve, Gordon scorned to travel on the road. He went straight across-country and put his unschooled troop-horse at the barrack-yard fence and the posts and rails round the park lands with as much *sang-froid* as though he were mounted on the most expert steeplechaser.' A certain roan horse he used then to ride became somewhat known in the district. Gordon's pride, however, suffered when occasionally he was refused admission to the country races on the footing of a gentleman; and once when he won a ladies' purse race, Mr. Sutherland tells us, the prize was awarded to another, on the snobbish grounds that the ladies had offered their prize to be contested for only by 'gentlemen'. Well, Shakespeare was no 'gentleman', only a play-actor, and Burns was a ploughboy; but perhaps the time will come when the world will judge a man not only by the coat that he wears or the calling that he follows.

Gordon would not compete in races on the flat. He loved to ride at headlong pace in steeplechase or hurdle events. He had many bad falls, and it was an accident of a particularly serious kind that occurred at Robe that gave him his introduction to his future wife, Miss Maggie Park, now Mrs. Peter Low, who in the *Adelaide Advertiser* of March 23, 1912, has set down, as far as she is at present willing to do so, her reminiscences of her first husband. She was born in Glasgow, and came out to South Australia as an infant. Her father was Mr. Alexander Park, who, when he landed originally in Victoria, carried on a baker's business in Melbourne, but shortly afterwards crossed the border, and accepted

an engagement at the station of the late Mr. W. Hutchison, near Robe. Gordon in 1862 was riding a fractious colt from which he had a heavy fall, several bones being broken. Confined for some time to bed in the inn, he was nursed by the landlord's wife, and by her niece, Miss Maggie Park. A pleasant-looking and cheerful lady, though barely five feet high, she attracted by her tender hand and gracious womanly ways the lonely man, who was still but nine-and-twenty, and who of late years had seen very little feminine society. She herself was a capable horsewoman, and on that side of her nature at least must have appealed to Gordon, though she had but small advantages compared with his in the matter of education. Regarding his poetical talents, she rather naïvely says, 'I didn't take much notice of his poetry'—though she claims to have 'always respected it': but she says, 'I felt more interest in his horses and riding.' She especially admired his firm seat and intrepid horsemanship; and when he became convalescent, at the end of October in 1862, they rode away eighty miles to be married at Mount Gambier.

He is reported to have proposed to her somewhat in this fashion; 'Well, girl, I like your ways. You seem industrious and sensible. If you like we shall get married next week, and you shall keep home for me.'

She was just eighteen years of age when she stood before the Rev. Mr. Don, the Presbyterian minister of that town. Gordon was at that time riding horses at Robe, among the best remembered of them being 'Cadger', 'Viking', and 'Ingleside'. Mrs. Low says that in the well-known picture in which he is seen clearing a big fence the horse under him is 'Viking'. They stayed first at furnished lodgings at Penola, but it was not long ere he took her to the pretty little cottage near

Mount Gambier—not far from his favourite cliffs at Cape Northumberland—where two happy years were spent. He never seems to have repented of his choice, and his letters breathe a mingled admiration and attachment for his wife. 'He loved his little thrifty girlish wife,' says Mr. Howlett-Ross, 'and he was never tired of praising the devotion and courage which she manifested during his dark days of adversity.' Years after the marriage he wrote: 'She has more pluck in her little finger than I have in my whole body. Through all the worries of our troubles she bore up with wonderful spirit, and always cheered me and kept me straight.'[1] It was unfortunately true, however, that in spite of the two happy years spent in their little comfortable home, and her cheery ways, which were tonic to his broody mind, his ingrained melancholy still coloured and stained all his outlook on life and is reflected in all his verses. The lines beginning 'Onward, onward, must we travel', show that even in the wattle-groves round his cottage the enigmas and mystery of life and the universe were oppressing and disturbing him. Still, there is at times also a calmer and more reasonable spirit, not without some more optimistic outlook on life, struggling for expression too; and as Mr. Sutherland says, 'Read the "Finis Exoptatus", knowing who wrote it, and where it was written; it will sound as one of the breeziest and manliest, yet most inly suggestive, of the ballad stanzas in the English language.'

Mrs. N. A. Lord, in the article to which we have already referred in the *Adelaide Advertiser*, most of which Mr. J. Howlett-Ross has incorporated in his Memoir of the poet, has given some very interesting reminiscences of Gordon's life at Mount Gambier and Dingley Dell, and some varied descriptions of the coast-line near

[1] See letter to Mr. Riddoch, Appendix V.

Cape Northumberland. Especially was she struck with 'the dense grove of wattles,' when she saw them 'just bursting into bloom, box-shrubs not yet clothed with their creamy white plumes (so like the English meadow-sweet), and another tall shrub which the boy called ti-tree, but is not the tree usually known by that name, the whole place full of the sights and scents and sounds which Gordon so expressively described—those "peals of laughter from the jays aloft" in the giant white gum-trees

> On slopes of the range.
> When the gnarl'd, knotted trunks Eucalyptian
> Seem carved, like weird columns Egyptian,
> With curious device—quaint inscription,
> And hieroglyph strange.'

In 1864, two years after their marriage, a letter came from England which opened up for Gordon a vista of leisure and study in the future. He and his wife had lived a laborious life, but their wants had been few, for he was of simple tastes and she had never known luxurious days. It was a pleasant shock therefore to learn that his mother's £20,000 had been divided into three parts, and that his share, which had been lying for the last five years in London, amounted, with accrued interest, to more than £7,000. The trustees of his mother's estate had been endeavouring vainly to discover where in the world the exiled beneficiary could be. They seem to have abandoned the search as fruitless, and it is very probable the poet would never have received the money but for the perseverance and good offices of one of them, Sir Alexander Trotter, who had continued the search on his own account. Gordon apparently had been completely ignorant that his mother possessed a fortune in her own right. He had learnt to regard his father's pension as the source of the family

income at home, and had never been further enlightened. It was now eleven years since he left England, and Mr. Sutherland tells us that he had never had a message from home during that time. His widow, however, says on the other hand that he 'wrote to his relatives in England often, and especially to his uncles, and he sent our photographs to them when we were married'. One would certainly imagine that Mrs. Low was most likely to be correct in this particular, but Gordon's reticence and independence of spirit seem to negative the idea that he approached of his own accord those whom he believed rightly or wrongly to have discarded him. His surprise also at the legacy received confirms the impression that he was not in touch with his relatives, as does also the fact that for five years his whereabouts were unknown to the trustees in England. His well-known aversion from letter-writing all his life makes us also doubt Mrs. Low's memory in this respect. His father's death, which happened three years after he left England, had removed the only one who was likely to correspond with him. His mother's malady had run its course and she had died two years after her husband. Ignez, his only surviving sister, was living in Italy, deeply ruing her unhappy marriage, and Gordon had been too sorely cut by the manner in which his relatives had treated him to be the first to open up a correspondence.

The money, which safely invested ought to have assured them an income of at least £400 a year, opened up a prospect of comparative opulence. Gordon, however, seems to have entertained the idea of making a trip 'Home', but he shrank from the idea of leaving Australia, the friends he had made, and the associations he had formed. He is reported to have said once that he had become 'too rough and uncouth for the civilization of Europe', and expressed the utmost horror of

being surrounded by the trammels, and oppressed with the shams, of so-called polite society; and certainly one does not feel that, to the free and easy bushman of Australia with his young wife, anything but a chilly welcome from the uncles and cousins, who as local magnates and in the Church, the Army and the Navy, were all of some consequence, would have been waiting. In this same year Gordon published at Mount Gambier a poem entitled 'The Feud', which appears in Appendix I of this edition, together with some account of the circumstances in which it was composed. It has never been included in an edition of his works before, and though not reaching to the level of his best achievements certain stanzas have been quoted as illustrating the author's 'strong individuality' and 'usual poetic fire'. It was composed as a commentary on six engravings from Sir Noel Paton's pictures on the old Scotch ballad of 'The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow'. The district could not furnish a copy of Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, but Gordon, who well knew the story but not its words, undertook to weave it afresh into ballad form.

Many of his verses had appeared in *The Border Watch*, and this thin quarto volume of verses just referred to, hitherto the most ambitious production of the Mount Gambier press, combined with his well-known horsemanship, the fact that he held landed property in the district, and the receipt of his substantial legacy, made folk begin to look up to him as a country gentleman. 'The Feud', though for the most part of little poetic worth, printed in book form, had a limited sale at a bazaar held to raise funds for a proposed local hospital; and that fact too contributed doubtless to the alteration of his position in the mind of the public; and, largely owing to the influence of Mr. John Riddoch, Gordon, considerably to his surprise, at the close of 1864

was asked to allow himself to be nominated for Parliament in the general election then imminent. The electors of the district had become dissatisfied with one of their representatives, the Hon. Randolph Stow, then Attorney-General, afterwards a judge of the Supreme Court. They considered that he was giving too much support to the squatters. The electors wished to be represented by a local man who could go to Adelaide and give proper attention to their interests, and Adam L. Gordon, being regarded as a 'fit and proper person', was approached for this purpose. At first he shrank from acceptance of the honour, with his consciousness of his limited powers of oratory, and his ignorance of the pressing political questions of the day. Mr. Woods claims to have been the active agent in finally securing his consent. On January 11, 1865, he was presented with a 'respectably signed' requisition, and on the afternoon of the same day made his first speech at a meeting of the electors held at Long's Assembly Rooms, Mount Gambier. His speech was followed by the usual 'heckling', which he resented with some spirit. On the following Wednesday, January 18, he addressed a meeting of electors in the same room, and gave 'a plain straightforward and unhesitating explanation of his views and opinions upon the political topics of the day'. The election created the utmost interest. Among the gentlemen who canvassed the district for Gordon and Riddoch, who were running in double-harness for the two vacant seats, was Mr. J. H. Mack, the father of Mr. David Mack. The constituency of 'Victoria', as it was then called, now includes the whole of that part of South Australia that lies between the River Murray and the Victorian border, and there was a wide area to be travelled over. Mr. W. Trainor, Gordon's henchman, himself a well-known cross-country rider, accompanied

Gordon through the greater part of his election campaign, and often the candidate and his supporter had to sleep under the stars at night, for settlement was not so thick nor means of communication so facile as they are to-day. Often, however, Mrs. Low tells us, 'instead of thinking of serious public affairs, Gordon was as usual scribbling poetry most of the time, and while he was engaged in composition it was no good speaking to him. He would give no reply. At the best of times,' she says, 'he was uncommunicative, but under such circumstances he was deaf to outside affairs.'

The contest was of no little bitterness, for the Blyth Ministry was then tottering to a fall by reason of its growing unpopularity with the democratic party, and the Ministry were exceedingly apprehensive of the consequences if their Attorney-General should be defeated. There were stirring times during the struggle, and at first it seemed as if the chances of victory for Gordon were small: but in spite of a jerky manner and a want of self-possession, Gordon made a tolerably good impression, and the enthusiasm of his friends was boundless. On the polling day, March 6, a desperate effort was made to bring every voter to the booths, and, when the counting was over, Stow was beaten by the narrow majority of three votes, and Gordon was declared the member for the Victoria district of South Australia. Penola, where he was especially popular, gave itself over to revelry. The Blyth Cabinet did not survive the shock of their Attorney-General's defeat, and resigned immediately after the receipt of the news on March 16, 1865. This caused some delay in the opening of Parliament, which did not indeed take place till May 23. Gordon and his wife on March 31 removed to Adelaide, and took a house in what is now Penzance Street, New Glenelg, where they continued to live, until he grew tired of taking

his place in Parliament as a supporter of the Ayers Ministry. Some samples of his political speeches are included in Appendix No. III of this edition.

Gordon welcomed, above all the privileges of his parliamentary life, the good library to which he now had access. He started off regularly about nine in the morning for the House, and, as it never met till late in the afternoon, he could settle himself down for a long day's enjoyment. He read the poets with tireless zeal, and also made some journeys along the paths of history, with an occasional book on travel or exploration to break the monotony. In the House it was the custom for each pair of members to have small writing-tables in front of their seats, and Gordon and his colleague for the Victoria district, John Riddoch of Yallum, shared a table in this fashion, and an intimacy sprang up between them which was one of the few lucky features of the poet's life, for Riddoch was a sensible and warm-hearted friend, whose influence on Gordon was for good throughout the rest of his days. Gordon's first speech was delivered on May 31, on the question of the annual leases of squatters. It was brief and to the point. On the 6th of June he returned to the subject in a carefully prepared speech, of which a quotation, and a criticism by Mr. Sutherland, appears in Appendix No. III of this edition. Gordon was in his place every day until the prorogation on August 1, but he soon tired of the proceedings and used to pass away the time in many a dreary debate by drawing caricatures and composing rhyming squibs. Mr. Sutherland says that the caricatures contained 'no indication that, even with training, he would ever have made a mark as an artist, the drawing is too hopeless in its inaccuracy', yet they have a certain spiciness of their own which gave them an interest, and Mr. Riddoch relates that it was a common enough

question in the House, 'Have you seen Gordon's latest?' The present writer has seen two of his sketches, which he gave to Sir Frank Madden, in an attempt to illustrate 'The Sick Stockrider', and they bear out Mr. Sutherland's criticism. Gordon's political record may be summed up for those who delight in statistics in the following statement. He presented four petitions, spoke nine times, carried the motion for the erection of a hospital at Mount Gambier, lost by twelve votes to sixteen a motion for building a railway from Narracoote to Robe, and attended to sundry other local matters devolving on a member of Parliament for the south-eastern division.

In 1866 he made a somewhat better start, and prophets were not wanting who predicted that he would make his mark in political life. But he himself grew disheartened, relapsed into silence when he found the eloquence spent on roads and bridges tedious and incapable of being illuminated by poetry. His speechlessness in the House became so noticeable, that a sketch-writer in one of the newspapers of the day said, 'The seconder was short if he was not sweet; impertinent persons are asking how it is that Mr. Gordon has never done anything since his first great classical and rhetorical oration. English history tells us of a "single-speech Hamilton", whose notoriety the member for Victoria should seek to avoid; at any rate it is better to say little, if it is good, than much, if it is bad.' On November 20 of that year he sent in his resignation. He was much liked in the House; his desk was always surrounded by admiring friends, and, despite his reserve, members frequently neglected the routine of the House for a 'chat with Gordon'. He was, we learn, greatly missed after his resignation, and the loss of his wit and conversation was frequently bemoaned by those members of Parliament whose interest lay in the lighter side of

public life. Shortly after he had retired from Parliament, his South Australian land was subdivided and leased out to farmers—an incident which doubtless inspired the verses ' Exodus Parthenidae ; or the Lay of the Last Squatter ', which appears in Appendix I. It is scarcely a typical but certainly a genuine ' Gordon '. Probably his resignation was partly due to his pecuniary losses and entanglements. Not one of his investments had turned out well. He had drawn £500 or £600 a year as income for the first two years, then bad seasons had come, and with them the loss of most of his capital. Partly, however, he was himself to blame, for the old worship of the race-horse had enthralled him again when he had felt himself in possession of a secure income.

His first parliamentary recess was occupied in putting finishing touches to a horse named ' Cadger ', belonging to Mr. J. C. James. On September 20 he rode this animal in the ' Grand Steeplechase ' of Adelaide, six other horses facing the starter by his side. The race was four miles across a number of low fences and a wall of moderate height, with a fairly wide ditch on either side. ' Cadger ' cleared this spreading leap handsomely, and Gordon's ultimate victory on him, caused largely by his rider's nerve and judgement, sent his name and fame as an amateur rider throughout the whole Colony. It was, however, a victory that cost him dear, for taking a fancy to ' Cadger ' he bought him, although he had two horses already in his stables which were proving a somewhat costly luxury to a man of his limited income. As the year 1866 advanced, he was sucked in closer to the vortex of the racing excitement which his soul loved, and took a strong interest in the various events at Melbourne, a city which up to that time he had not seen. After his second parliamentary session in 1865, Gordon took a trip across the border into Victoria, and in December

rode at Ballarat in a Handicap Steeplechase at Dowling Forest. He trained a powerful black jumper, named 'Ballarat', belonging to Neil Black, and rode it to a memorable victory. There were only six starters, and at the finish the tussle lay between 'Ballarat' and 'Apelles'. The race was over a five mile course, and Gordon's steady, cautious riding had the best of results, for he cantered quite easily at last through the posts, looking back over his shoulder at his straining rival. Gordon's name became very popular with the Ballarat racing public, and he brought his horse 'Cadger' in the flush of his triumph to Melbourne for the races on New Year's Day, 1866. It was his first visit to Melbourne, and he seems to have greatly enjoyed it, though 'Cadger', who took but the eighth position in a field of twelve, justified his owner's earlier impression, that he 'was not up to the Melbourne standard'. An idea of his spareness at this time may be gained from the fact that, in spite of his tallness, with saddle and bridle included he weighed only 9 stone 10 lb. He went back to Adelaide discomfited, but with his passion for horses by no means extinguished. His widow says of him at this time, 'he never betted, and he never rode for money, but he trained and raced horses, and that is an expensive pastime, for when he lost a race he lost money also.'

At this time there was in Melbourne a well-conducted sporting paper called *Bell's Life in Victoria*, which Gordon regularly read, and to which he contributed in August of this year 'Visions in the Smoke', and in October, 'Ye Wearie Wayfarer'. In 1866 he also wrote two pieces which he called 'Whiffs from the Pipe', but these are not amongst his most typical verses, though, hidden away sometimes in their rollicking lines, there breathes some deeper emotion, which peeps up through the rough setting with the charm of the unexpected. There is

a half-reckless, half-hopeless philosophy running through these poems, and perhaps the most-quoted lines from all Gordon's poetry occur in the last 'Fytte' of 'Ye Wearie Wayfarer':

Question not, but live and labour
Till yon goal be won,
Helping every feeble neighbour,
Seeking help from none;
Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone,
KINDNESS in another's trouble,
COURAGE in your own.

Mention has been already made of the failure of his various investments. He also lost his tenants at MacDonnell Bay, while other money that he had invested at Nichol Bay was practically thrown away. He also had been led to the resignation of his seat in Parliament by the necessity he was under of going to Western Australia to look after land that he had purchased there. Mr. Sutherland says, 'Meantime a little *son* had been born to him, and so, leaving the mother and child in the cottage at Glenelg, he went away for a month or two to the West. For several weeks he camped out, and his experiences cured him of any romantic notions he had entertained of making a living for himself by sheep-farming.' Mrs. Peter Low says that it was a baby *daughter*, who was christened Annie Lindsay Gordon, and not a son, that was born to him at that time. She adds, that 'Gordon was passionately fond of her, and the child's death occurring as it did ten months later, when they were living at Ballarat, and at a time when he had had a bad fall from a young horse he was riding, which so seriously injured him that he was confined to his bed for many weeks, had a great effect upon his spirits.'

The baby lies buried in the cemetery near Lake Wendouree, and there is a marble slab over her grave, but nothing in the inscription to tell that she is the poet's child.

On his return from the West, Gordon once more set up his home near Mount Gambier, living on what had been saved from the wreck of his fortunes, and nursing a hope that he might yet make a livelihood by means of literature. His verses in *Bell's Life*, though professing to be only rhyming tips, had attracted the notice of a small but brilliant literary coterie, which was then gathering in Melbourne, among whom were Mr. George Gordon McCrae, Mr. James Moloney, Mr. (now Sir) Frank Madden, and Mr. J. J. Shillinglaw, and he was encouraged to continue the series.[1]

In 1866 the *Australasian* had been founded, and in its earliest numbers unsigned verses from his pen occasionally appeared. The first of these was 'The Old Leaven', a dialogue which appears in this edition. In January 1867 Gordon for the first time fully proved that he had in him some of the music-making power of the masters. 'Frustra', which now appears as 'Thora's Song' in *Ashtaroth*, is certainly almost worthy to rank with Tennyson's songs, and is far more musical than most of Browning's.

In August 1867 that melodious but melancholy set of verses called 'Whither Bound', which now bears the title 'Quare Fatigasti', appeared in the *Australasian*, and in September of that year, Messrs. George Robertson & Co., of Melbourne, issued, at the poet's expense, the first volume of poems from his pen, entitled *Sea Spray and Smoke Drift*. The five hundred copies of the edition cost about £50, and, could he have sold them all, there would have been a reasonable profit from the venture. Not one hundred, however, found purchasers, and save for a contemptuous paragraph in one or two newspapers,

[1] See notes to 'Banker's Dream,' p. 367.

no notice was taken of the volume, with the exception of a review which appeared in *Bell's Life*. He was bitterly disappointed, apparently not having anticipated failure, or

> The lot austere
> That ever seems to wait upon
> The man of letters here,

as his friend Henry Kendall puts it. The volume certainly contains some fine verses, the bulk of them, as the title indicates, having been composed while he sat blowing 'the cool tobacco cloud' on a favourite rock-ledge, overlooking the waves of the Southern Ocean near Cape Northumberland, that broke into foam on the bluestone boulders far beneath him. Mr. Alexander Sutherland, writing in 1898, ventures the opinion that 'Whisperings in Wattle-Boughs' is 'one of the three most musical and most pathetic poems ever written in Australia'. Although the first volume had thus been born into a cold world, a few months later *Ashtaroth*, his second venture, was published, and met, though much more deservedly, with a still frostier welcome. The characteristics of this poem are discussed in the notes appended to this volume, and perhaps its chief merit consists in the several fine lyrics scattered through the poem, which atone somewhat for its general barrenness. There are also some spirited descriptions of conflict and fighting, especially in that scene where the Abbess watches the battle from the window. The edition of five hundred copies lay, however, like a weary load on the publishers' shelves. They were never once startled by the entrance of any eccentric person who wanted to buy a copy. These failures were serious drains on Gordon's already depleted purse, and he was too open-handed and too generous to his companions, no matter

how worthless. He would always take at his face-value any 'good fellow' who would 'talk horse' to him, without thought of whether it were right to trust him or not.

As the year 1867 drifted on, the hope of making money by his verses was abandoned in favour of a plan for startling the publisher with a novel. It, however, never grew beyond its ground-plan, and perforce he had to cast round for some task less ideal to earn his bread and butter. From Robe Mr. and Mrs. Gordon went to Ballarat, and bought Craig's Livery Stables, which were adjacent to the well-known hotel. To complete the purchase of the horses and vehicles, he had to mortgage his last remaining piece of land, his farm near Penola. The weatherboard cottage of six rooms in which he lived in Ballarat stood in an enclosure, now merged in the ground of the Roman Catholic Convent near Lake Wendouree. He had £8 a week to pay for rent; new horses had to be bought, but horse-feed was cheap; and there seemed good reason to expect a turn in his luck.

It is a little difficult to picture the poet in this new environment. As far as Ballarat was concerned there seemed to be no literary atmosphere or circle in which his distinctive gifts might find play. He found plenty of men willing and able to talk horses and dogs and boxing, but it is on his occasional visits to different parts of Victoria to ride in local races that we get the most characteristic pictures of the old Gordon. It was by this means that Sir Frank Madden first came into contact with Gordon, and in a rather amusing fashion. Gordon in Ballarat, a member of the local Hunt Club, had received an invitation, in common with his fellow members, to journey to Flemington, where Mr. Madden (as he was then) was not only riding, but reporting the

racing for the Melbourne *Argus*. The next morning, when the report of that particular day's sport appeared, there was no mention of Gordon's horse, or Gordon's position in the race at the finish. It was a very wet day, and it was nothing to the poet's discredit that he did not win, but he wrote a letter to the *Argus*, complaining of the silence maintained in the report regarding him. Mr. Madden, now that Gordon's guard was down, ventured the next day on some rapier thrusts at this 'dare-devil steeplechaser crying for a puff in print'. Thereupon Gordon called on the editor, and asked for the name of his adversary. This was at first refused him, until in answer to his insistent queries as to the reporter's name, he was asked, 'What do you want to know for?' whereupon he replied, 'that I may go and shake hands with him, for he has given me as good a drubbing as ever I got in my life'. Eventually he appears to have got the necessary name and address, for soon afterwards he appeared in the office of Mr. Madden's father, and as the tall, lanky man entered the son's room saying, 'Is your name Madden?' he was greeted with the recognition, 'Oh! you are Gordon!' The friendship thus begun continued until Gordon's death, and on many subsequent occasions they rode steeplechases side by side. Gordon, who was unable to read with any ease or fluency his own compositions, used too whenever possible to bring them to his new friend, and get him to read them aloud that he might judge the better of their musical effect. In this way Mr. Madden saw the manuscripts of such poems as 'The Sick Stockrider', which he told Gordon was 'too good to read aloud at first glance, but that if he would come back to-morrow he would try and give him the full effect of it,' and also that of 'How we beat the favourite', before they were seen by any of the public. Gordon used to lie back and listen to his own compositions with

evident enjoyment and relish. These poems, however, belong to a slightly later period than that with which we are now dealing.

The Livery Stables, which necessarily to a large extent were a credit business, and required a certain amount of book-keeping for which he himself was quite unfit, seemed to demand the presence of a partner, and Gordon's choice fell upon Harry Mount, one of the most brilliant amateur horsemen of the Colony, who could jump over a hurdle perhaps better than any other man living in Australia. One cannot help feeling that a good steady man with a head for figures would have served Gordon's purpose better than this young fellow, who lingered over his glass and his game of billiards at Craig's Hotel. The firm of Gordon and Mount, therefore, muddled along for a few months longer, but Gordon's short-sightedness caused him many accidents—now a broken finger through failure to see that he was standing near the heels of a noted kicker: the finger cured, an injury to the head just a month later, in July 1868, not so easily healed. He was riding a powerful black horse out of the gate, when it swerved and its rider's head was smashed with great violence against a hard-wood post he did not see. It was then that he received that dent in the skull which, up to the time of his death, could easily hold the tip of a little finger. He was confined to his bed as the result for some weeks, and during this time it was that his baby daughter died. Gordon was never afterwards quite the same man; always solitary, taciturn, and sombre in his outlook, his melancholy was certainly increased, and from this time forward its signs were plainly visible to his intimate friends. His passion for racing was still strong upon him, in spite of all his losses and mishaps; he still owned 'Cadger', together with a stout little bay steeplechaser

named 'Viking', and a mare named 'Maude', which he rode on Saturdays at the Hunt Club.

He joined the Ballarat troop of Light Horse, a company once well known in Victoria, though only twenty-five in number. They were drilled in the tan-covered yard at Gordon's stables. Often detained by his business past the time for falling in, Gordon would charge up the streets in full uniform on 'Maude', take the fence at a flying leap, and fall into line sedately among his amused comrades. Mr. W. Davidson (now of the Public Works Department), Mr. Sutherland tells us, used to relate how the poet was once a candidate for the position of sergeant, a rank to which the members of the Corps had the right of electing one of themselves. There were three candidates in all, and one of them had so reckoned on being elected owing to a canvass he had made among the members, that he informed his people in England that he was practically appointed; whereupon there arrived, from a wealthy uncle of his, a handsome dress-sword, consigned to the nephew, whom he addressed as Lieutenant. This exasperated the men, and feeling ran high. Gordon's proposition to settle the difficulty was that, as it was a fighting position that was in question, a fighting man was needed, and, in order to discover which of them was the better fighter, he and the other candidate should be shut into a loose-box and kept there, till they had settled the matter between them, the winner of the bout to get the promotion. The Corps, however, for the sake of peace, decided to elect the third and more pacific candidate, who was in all other respects quite eligible.

Gordon's financial position towards the end of 1868 is clearly indicated in a long letter to his friend Mr. Riddoch which appears in Appendix V, *post*. The money to which he alludes in the second paragraph offered a chance of clearing off his mounting liabilities,

and he resolved to escape from a difficult position. His widow says that the loss of his child was one of the determining causes that made Gordon leave Ballarat. However that may be, certain it is that about this time he did decide to leave, eventually settling with his wife at Brighton, about eight miles from Melbourne, where he resided for the last eighteen months of his life. The three races which the letter declares he had to ride in Melbourne were actually ridden on October 10, 1868, and he won all three—the Melbourne Hunt Club Cup (which he won on 'Babbler'), the Metropolitan Steeplechase (on his own 'Viking'), and the Selling Steeplechase, in which he rode 'Cadger', who, with 'Canary', was made a favourite for the race. Gordon's magnificent riding was such that he shot ahead and won with a length or two to spare, and 'Cadger' was thereupon sold to the highest bidder for £40. How much of the success of Gordon's riding at any time was due to recklessness and indifference to his life it would be hard to say; certainly in these last three races he had a secret handicap in the fact that, as the letter informs us, he half cherished in his heart the hope of being killed. Gordon's manner of riding was far from perfect. As we have said, he told Mr. Moloney he never *saw* beyond his horse's ears. When he galloped, he leant very far back in the saddle, and when he came to jump, lay with the peak of his cap turned upwards, a mode he always affected, with his head actually touching the crupper, so that, as Sir Frank Madden says, it was often possible to see the mark of the crupper staining Gordon's shirt when he perspired between the shoulders. But Gordon had, with all his defects, that absolute sympathy with a horse which few riders possess: he knew just how to train and just how to get every pound at the dangerous pinch out of his mount. It was at this time that he first made the

acquaintance of Marcus Clarke, and in the *Colonial Monthly* for December, 1868, of which Clarke was then editor, there appeared his poem, 'Doubtful Dreams.'

Before coming to Melbourne, Mrs. Gordon went for a time to South Australia, and he filled up the interval in training and riding. During the months of October and November 1868 he stayed with Mr. Robert Power at Toorak. Gordon supervised the work of his jockeys, and seems to have improved considerably in health. In a letter written at this time he notes that he is 'very temperate, taking only one glass of grog' at bedtime, and not smoking quite so much, 'though still perhaps more than is good for me'. He continues: 'So far as muscular action is concerned I am not weak, and when the fit is on and the headache is off, I can take as much exercise as ever. I walk alongside the horses some miles every morning before breakfast and then take a swim in the Yarra.'

On the final day of the Spring Meeting at Flemington, Gordon rode 'Viking', of which Mr. Power was now part-owner, to a signal victory, though he reaped no financial benefit, for, as he needed money to send to Mrs. Gordon to pay her fare back to Melbourne, he had sold his share in the horse for £75. A description of his tactics in this race, taken from Mr. Sutherland's account, may not be out of place.

'At the start of the race Gordon kept well in the background, but on reaching the second fence two of the leading horses refused to cross; other two led over it, and soon the active 'Viking', clearing the obstacle lightly and easily, made a little effort and placed himself even with them. Then the three strode side by side for a long time, and entered together on the straight run for the finish. Gordon's skill determined the contest. He brought the staunch little "Viking", over-weighted as she was under a handicap of 11 stone 3 lb., out of the

trio, and though the horses behind him laboured hard to the goading of whip and spur, Gordon easily put a dozen lengths' clear turf behind him, and as he neared the winning post, he reined in the gallant "Viking" to an easy canter, while stand and flat let go its pent-up roar of applause.'

Gordon seemed, however, to have lost his zest for racing, and was more cynical than triumphant. He writes a week later:

'I did not go near the course on Cup day, nor yet on Friday; and on Saturday, after my steeplechase was over, I locked myself up in one of the empty horse-boxes in the saddling paddock, and smoked a pipe while the other races were being run. I ride only for money now, and who knows but that if I were to stop a little longer at this game, I might become less particular than I ought to be. If I could find any sort of work in which I could earn enough money to live by and keep my wife in bread and clothes, I shall swear against ever going near a racecourse again.'

At this time, too, he gave indications that his principles in regard to betting had undergone some deterioration. He says, 'though I don't hold with betting as a rule, still it is not much worse than speculation of other kinds, and a man is justified in risking £5 when he has a good chance of making it into £100. Besides, I have swallowed too many camels to strain now at a gnat.' Unfortunately, he left another man to get the 'odds on' for him, and the latter failed to do so. He ends that letter with the words, 'I am heartily sick of the life I have been leading and I do not now care even for riding. The only ride I have enjoyed since my last fall was the hunt in which Mrs. Gordon rode so well alongside of me'. This last reference is interesting, because it was seldom that Gordon could persuade his wife to ride with him, though she and her husband, according to her own accounts,

both followed the hounds at the hunts in Melbourne, her favourite mount being a horse named 'Johnny Raw'. Gordon had kept the hounds at Ballarat himself, in order to eke out his precarious income, for a year, and Mrs. Low says,—distance perhaps leading her to exaggerate her share in these events, for on the testimony of Sir Frank Madden, and other of his Melbourne friends, she but seldom accompanied him—

'I followed wherever he went, and I never had a fall, although he had a good many because of his defective vision. Once while we were hunting at Ballarat his horse slipped on the crumbling bank of a creek, and both horse and rider fell into the stream. Mr. Gordon was nearly drowned. I got over all right and wondered where he had gone. He could not see, and had to trust to his horse to take-off at the proper distance. He had many bad falls both in the hunting-field and while racing, but he had a good many wins also. He was moreover always ready to do what he could to help others, and it was he who rode "from the wreck" of the "Admella", to the nearest township, as he describes in his well-known poem.'

It was at Mr. Power's house that he composed that beautiful 'Song of Autumn', which unfortunately was only too prophetic in its closing lines, for, when Autumn ended, Lindsay Gordon was lying dead amongst the heaped-up leaves which the Brighton sea-breezes had strewn beneath the trees:

> Girl! when the garlands of next year glow,
> *You* may gather again, my dear—
> But *I* go where the last year's lost leaves go
> At the falling of the year.

At this period Gordon spent much time in congenial society, talking horses and sport, hearing and telling anecdotes of the marvellous or the humorous, both of which had a peculiar fascination for him, and oftener

than his wont with that musical, hearty laugh, which William Trainor noted in him long before in South Australia, which proclaimed always that Gordon was—as he too seldom was, except in the presence of a very few chosen friends—completely at his ease. He also did some more racing, but in February 1869 he accepted an invitation from Mr. Riddoch to spend the summer with his family at Yallum in South Australia. He took the train to Ballarat, picked up there an old mare of his named 'Fairy' which he had never sold, and rode across the border, to spend in that happy home circle, which he describes as having a 'mixture of simple tastes with cultured pursuits', the last truly delightful months he was to know. It was here that he wrote for Miss Riddoch's album the poem 'Argemone', which we are fortunate in including among his poems in Appendix I. It was indeed the most productive poetic harvest-time of his life. 'There is at Yallum Park a gnarled old gum-tree that stands in a paddock not far from the house, and which is known still as "Gordon's tree".' Most mornings after breakfast he would climb up to a natural arm-chair formed in it by a crooked limb. There he would fill his old clay pipe and, while he smoked, would scribble with his pencil on the paper spread before him on a branch, or sometimes resting on his hat, while meal-times came and went without his hearing 'that tocsin of the soul—the dinner bell'. He seldom or never wrote his verses on a decent sheet of paper: one of his favourite places being, according to Sir Frank Madden, the flyleaf of any book he happened to be reading when the moment of inspiration came. When at length consideration for Gordon's appetite triumphed over his host's unwillingness to disturb his poetic musings, and he was specially called, he would slide down the trunk and apologize for delay. Here he probably

wrote 'The Sick Stockrider', and perhaps re-wrote old verses of his which were linked with a Warwickshire memory of his early youth, and which perhaps have done more to endear him to Australia than anything else he ever did, those lines which he called 'How we beat the Favourite', which 'stand perfectly unique as a specimen of what racing poetry should be'. The fact that it was composed on Australian soil is the only thing that links it to this country. In everything else it is typically English. Here also he probably composed 'From the Wreck' and 'Wolf and Hound'.

In February he was due in Melbourne again to ride in a steeplechase, and leaving the peaceful home circle of Yallum behind him, he took the road to Coleraine, where he left 'Fairy' and two other horses of Riddoch's, which he had brought over for the purpose. He then took coach for Ballarat, writing on the way home a set of verses not published until after his death.

When he left Yallum, St. Valentine's Day, now a festival 'more honoured in the breach than in the observance', was near at hand, and the Yallum children had given him a valentine, decorated with a basket of flowers, and with a blank page attached, which they asked him to fill with verses, in order that they might send it to their aunt, Miss Lord. The lines are now printed in his works under the title 'A Basket of Flowers'. He arrived in Melbourne in time to ride his race, and he earnestly hoped it might be his last. Henceforth he would have preferred to earn his living any other way than among horses. At this time he writes, 'I have at present not the least idea of what I am going to do; I have a straightforward offer from the *Australasian* to write for that paper. Perhaps I might thus make enough to live on; but at any rate I am awfully sick of the life I have been living and the society I have not been able

to escape from.' The offer alluded to was that of sporting reporter, but recognizing that it would take him to every country race-meeting, and throw him into the company of those who hang round hotels and stables, and feeling that his thirst for stimulants was growing upon him, and also an insomnia (once relieved by the use of opiates, which he had continual struggles with himself to refrain from further indulgence in), he refused the offer in the hope of finding something fraught with less peril to himself.

On March 27 of that year, he once more mounted the heavy 'Babbler', and the newspapers the following Monday declared that, 'Gordon only played with his opponents during the early part of the race, and that the moment he pleased to put his horse at its best, he shot easily forward and came in far ahead of all pursuers.' Mrs. Gordon returned from South Australia about the middle of 1869, and it was then they chose furnished rooms in the house of a gardener named Kelly, at that time in the employ of George Higinbotham, afterwards Chief Justice of Victoria. He had some access, through Higinbotham's kindness, to his library, which was a boon to him, for at that time he had not more than half a dozen battered volumes of his own on a shelf in his sitting-room. He himself gives us a catalogue of them thus: 'A *Turf Register*; half of a religious work that came into my hands I don't know how; a dilapidated dictionary; *David the Shepherd King*, with the author's compliments, which no one will borrow or steal; and a volume of my own verses, which I cannot get rid of.' But his poetic fame was slowly, too slowly, spreading. 'The Sick Stockrider' acquired an immediate popularity. It was copied from the *Colonial Monthly* into the *Australasian* and many up-country journals, to his own astonishment, for he says, 'these verses made quite

a stir in Melbourne, and have been spoken of with praise, but I do not think much of them myself.' The eight lines which originally ended the poem will be found in the notes, p. 368 *post.*

At this time he came to mingle more and more in the small literary circle to which allusion has already been made. In the office of the *Colonial Monthly* there was many a congenial gathering, where such conversation as he loved roamed lightly over literary topics, with many a digression into the realms of sport, and was punctuated by 'yarns' more or less entertaining, and often by 'laughter holding both his sides'. The company had its dangers for Gordon, for not only were the Muses worshipped, but libations were poured to the God of Wine; the air often grew thick with tobacco-smoke; and the office boy replenished from time to time the empty glasses from a neighbouring hotel. Gordon also became a member of the newly-formed 'Yorick' Club, and there increased his acquaintanceship with its members already referred to, McCrae, Shillinglaw, and Clarke, and a little later came also through its instrumentality to know Henry Kendall, the foremost of Australian-born poets. Though the idiosyncrasies of the three men were in many respects widely dissimilar, Clarke's belonging to the polished school of the old world, while Kendall's were akin to those of his own native land, and Gordon's such as we have already attempted to depict, the acquaintanceship ripened into mutual admiration and friendship. At times Gordon's incisive talk—'at times', because often he was the 'most uninteresting of companions', as his friend Mr. Moloney does not scruple to assert—and always, his gentlemanliness and his growing power as a poet, made him a welcome visitor in that literary and Bohemian coterie, which used at that time to assemble nightly at the Café of the Theatre Royal to

discuss coffee (and other liquids) and intellectual themes. Gordon's impromptu verses, often composed in this company, though they seem to have been pretty numerous, were not—judging from the one example the present writer has actually heard quoted—marked by any extraordinary sense of rhythm, nor do they sparkle with a wit which might have atoned for their technical deficiency. Sir Frank Madden is responsible for the perpetuation of this one, occasioned by the boasting of a certain rider regarding the merits of a mare of his :

> And none like me,
> Being mean like me,
> Shall die like me,
> While the world remains ;
> I will rise with her,
> Lead the field with her
> While she will fall with me,
> Crushing me, bones and brains.

Meanwhile he was living healthily at Brighton, not omitting his morning plunge summer or winter, and powerful swimmer that he was, and with his usual reckless disregard of danger, which at these times took the form of sharks, would head out half a mile into the bay before he turned. Once he was warned of the peril, and as an indication of the settling down on him of that melancholia which he had inherited from his mother and accelerated himself, he replied that, if death came without his actually seeking it, he would have no cause for complaint. His sleeplessness also was increasing, and though he bravely tried by means of physical fatigue, long walks, and daring gallops to woo ' tired nature's sweet restorer ', he grew less and less successful. Most mornings he exercised his horses ; most afternoons he walked the eight miles to Melbourne and sometimes

back again ; and to get more exercise, and more fatigue, he joined the Brighton Artillery Corps, to which his landlord belonged, and enjoyed the drill and rifle practice, though with his nearness of sight he could never have been a successful shot.

The series of heavy falls had more than once fractured his skull ; the mental, if not physical, canker within him tightened its grip, and he became, in spite of all his struggles, more and more the victim of despondency and aversion from the duties of life. It was at this time that he wrote, voicing the fatalistic philosophy which seemed now to bound his horizon :

> No man may shirk the allotted work,
> The deed to do, the death to die ;
> At least I think so,—neither Turk,
> Nor Jew, nor infidel am I,—
> And yet I wonder when I try
> To solve one question, may or must,
> And shall I solve it by and by,
> Beyond the dark, beneath the dust ?
> I trust so, and I only trust.

It was that old Barony of Esslemont, which Robert Gordon had bought a century and a quarter before, which was the immediate cause of Gordon's death in 1870. It had been strictly entailed, in accordance with the purchaser's original intention on his return from France, to found a landed family. The estate, which was locked up in Chancery, was worth now about £2,000 a year, and had been for a long time in the possession of a Mr. Huntley Gordon, who, on his death, bequeathed it to his daughter, Mrs. Wooldridge.

The Gordon family in England seemed to regard Mr. Huntley Gordon's will as a piece of unjustified presumption on his part, seeing that none but male heirs

might succeed to the estate. The lady had been four years in possession before Gordon heard of the matter. It was in 1868 that his uncle, Hamilton Gordon, wrote to him, advising him to lay claim, as the nearest male heir, to the property. The letter reached him just before he left Ballarat, and at first he seems to have built little on the hope of any good coming of it. He replied to his uncle that he was disinclined, in view of her long occupancy, to contest Mrs. Wooldridge's rights, but learning, in 1869, that she was very wealthy without this estate at all, he seems to have become terribly and painfully in earnest in the hope of gaining this £2,000 a year, not for himself but for his wife. Already he had forebodings that he personally would never enjoy the wealth. On one occasion he is reported to have said, 'that his system was too shattered to weather the storms of life long enough for him to enjoy the ease and freedom from pecuniary embarrassment that the income would confer.' As a matter of fact, it was rather unfortunate at a time when his melancholia was tightening its hold on him, and almost absolute freedom from excitement should have been prescribed, that he entered on the perplexities, the anticipations and disappointments, that litigation usually brings. But for his wife's sake, there is no doubt that he would not have moved in the matter. The battered and crazy state of his constitution, the fact that he had no male heir to succeed him whatever, might have counselled him not to embark on the course which his uncle had suggested; but, in order that his wife might be lifted above the strain and stress of poverty after her years of toil and anxiety, and seeing that there were already four years' accrued income in addition to the certain annuity afterwards, he sought the advice of George Higinbotham as to the most suitable solicitor to consult in the matter.

Mr. J. C. Stewart, of Malleson, England & Stewart, was the chief authority on Scottish law in the Melbourne of that time, and he stated a case for his client to be submitted to a leading advocate in Edinburgh. In January 1870 there arrived an 'opinion' which seemed to justify his strongest hopes of a successful issue. An exhaustive search had been made among the registers of Edinburgh, and it was learned that the entail had never been broken or interfered with in any way. Gordon's letters reflect his feelings at that time, and on the strength of his hopes he still further entangled himself by borrowing some money from a Jew. He writes, 'My title seems clear enough. All that the other side have to go upon is an Act of 1848, which made entailed estates subject to the debt bonds of the holders. Stewart has gone over the papers and believes that they are wrong. However, the news by next mail ought to put the matter straight.'

The next mail brought satisfactory news, and Gordon in his need of money sought further advances from his friends. Mr. Riddoch gave him a loan of some money, but it was soon swallowed up in preliminary expenses. Meanwhile his wife had received news that her father was dying in South Australia, and, to enable her to see him, he had to provide further money.

In a couple of months his loan was swallowed up, and he was ashamed to trespass further on his friend's goodness. Instead he began to let his debts grow; paid his landlord in promises, and ran up bills at the Brighton shops, so sure was he that in a very short time he would be able to pay everybody. In order to raise a little ready cash, he accepted an offer to ride in one last race on Major Baker's big black horse, 'Prince Rupert', on Saturday, March 12, 1870. There were eleven starters,

among them being 'Babbler', whom Gordon had previously steered to victory. The others got away before him, but at the sheds Gordon caught them. At the first jump all five horses rose almost together. At the second 'Prince Rupert' and 'Reindeer' had the lead, and at the log fence immediately ahead, 'Prince Rupert' led the field, but he took the leap too eagerly, and struck. Gordon was thrown over the horse's head and fell in a dangerous fashion. He jumped to his feet again and was at once in the saddle. The blow, however, had been a serious one, and he was seen to reel in his seat. He said afterwards that he was 'quite dazed and hardly knew where he was or what he was doing'. Yet he recovered his lost ground and led all the way past the Abattoirs. Then his skill seemed to leave him: he swayed heavily and his hand lost its steadiness. At the third and last fence, 'Prince Rupert' fell, and again Gordon was thrown heavily. This time his horse got away; the race became a struggle between 'Reindeer' and 'Dutchman', and at the winning post 'Dutchman' by a strenuous effort secured the victory. Among those present was Mr. Blackmore, Parliamentary Librarian at Adelaide, who was in Melbourne on a holiday. He took the injured man to Brighton, and on the Monday following Major Baker drove him into town to see a doctor. The verdict was ominous; there were internal injuries which could be mended, but the already much-battered head was not likely to stand this fresh mishap. He lay in bed five days, but as he could neither sleep nor rest he rose and went about his business. His letters written at that time expressed the belief that this time he was 'done for'. He resumed his old practice of walking into town in the afternoons, and about this time he began to see a good deal of Kendall. He himself was preparing his most popular volume, *Bush Ballads and Galloping*

Rhymes, and Kendall and he in a kind of literary brotherhood encouraged and stimulated each other. In one of his letters Gordon says of Kendall : ' He is certainly the best poet out here. I think him better than Horne. A. C. Swinburne has sent him a most complimentary letter upon a work of his which went home ; indeed it is a sort of rhapsody.' Kendall in a letter to friends in New South Wales, on the other hand, considers Gordon's poetry, ' to be by far the strongest work yet done in Australia '. There was one short period of estrangement between the two poets, ended by a manly letter and a set of humorous verses sent by Gordon to Kendall. The latter's fine poem on his dead friend will be found in Appendix II to this volume. In order to get funds to leave him free to prepare his book, Gordon visited again the den of one of those moneylenders who advertise that advances are made to those entitled to legacies or remittances from the old country. Gordon was accommodated with a small sum, but the interest charged him worked out at about 90 per cent per annum. At this rate he could not keep afloat much longer. Cheered, however, by some English notices of his first book he worked on through the month of May, waiting as patiently as might be for news as to the fate of his claim to Esslemont.

The June mail at one blow smashed his hopes to pieces. It had all along been known that the Act of 1848 had abolished certain classes of entail, but the lawyers he consulted seemed to have taken it for granted that it did not affect the particular estate in which Gordon was interested. Now came the news that by a recent decision of the Scotch law-courts, sustained on appeal to the Privy Council, the class of entail to which Esslemont belonged was included in the category, and that it was effectually barred. He was now no nearer the acquisition of any permanent employment. He had no means of paying his debts,

amounting in Brighton alone to about £100. To the Jew moneylenders he was in debt £50, to Mr. Riddoch £200, and in addition he would shortly have to meet the total cost of his volume of poems, for which, amounting to some £60 or £70, he was himself liable. All these things naturally brought on a fit of despondency, and for two days he tramped the streets of Melbourne in that feeble and Micawber-like fashion of waiting for ' something to turn up ', which is never likely to be productive of success. The man not knowing what he wants to do and yet willing to do anything is too common in great cities. Gordon could do two things, and do them well—he could ride well and he could write well. He was anxious to avoid the former, and, as he had no faculty for prose writing, and felt at home only in verse, his outlook was fairly hopeless. Poetry, save for the very few, is no means of livelihood ; certainly in Melbourne in 1870 the thing could not have been done.

He wandered in very low spirits through the streets, in the last stage of melancholia, when, on the afternoon of the day on which his book was published, June 23, and with a definite statement of his liability to his publishers in his pocket, he met Marcus Clarke, whose congratulations were given to him over a friendly glass, and the praise and the stimulant together appear temporarily to have heartened him. During the forenoon he had also seen a two-column critique which was to appear in the next Saturday's *Australasian*, written by Kendall, who had obtained a rough proof for correction, and showed him the article in print. The article was most laudatory. It ' spoke of some of the poems as being of the kind in which Whyte-Melville, to whom indeed the volume was dedicated, on the one hand, and Charles Kingsley on the other, chiefly excelled, but estimating Gordon's poems as undoubtedly superior to the work

of either. Several of the poems were described as rivalling Swinburne on his own ground; the romances were pronounced to be as good as any in the language, that of "Britomarte" being singled out for special praise'. Soon afterwards Gordon met Kendall in Collins Street. The two poets were equally out-at-elbows, and disconsolately they wandered into the Argus Hotel, wherein they spent the last couple of shillings they could muster. For a couple of hours they seemed to have forgotten the gnawing cares which were eating at their hearts, for both were miserably poor and ill-fitted to battle against the practical difficulties of life.

It was a pity, in the unfortunate state of Gordon's brain, that he yielded this day of all others to the exhilaration which usually followed his indulgence in drink, but Mr. Alexander Sutherland, on the testimony of Sir Frank Madden, is entirely wrong in saying that in Brighton Gordon found waiting to see him a festive friend with whom he further indulged, and who, coinciding with Gordon's gloomy views, agreed with him that the best thing he could do was to shoot himself. As a matter of fact Sir Frank Madden walked as far as St. Kilda that evening with him, and his despondency and pessimism had certainly gained the upper hand in him. He had earlier in the afternoon made application to a common friend for a loan of £100 and been refused, and on this their last walk together bemoaned his friendlessness and poverty and ill-luck. But it is equally matter of fact, that after tea with his wife he remained lying on the horsehair couch of the little sitting-room, rising only once to try some new cartridges to fit the barrel of the rifle which he had in his room, and that he and his wife that night went to bed early. Next morning, when the winter daybreak was scarcely visible, he rose and dressed himself quietly. He stooped and

kissed his sleeping wife, who afterwards remembered the consciousness of having her face swept by his long beard. Then he took down the rifle which, as a member of the Volunteer corps, he had in his possession, and passed out into the grey street and along the low cliffs at Brighton Beach towards what is now the Retreat Hotel at Hampton.

It seems that he called at the Marine Hotel and asked for the landlord, Mr. Prendergast, a friend of his, who, unfortunately, was not up—unfortunately, because he might have seen that all was not normal with Gordon, and might have detained him or induced him to return home. But it was not to be, and a little later a fisherman named Harrison saw him striding along the sand, marked the rifle balanced in his hand, but received none of the customary greetings with which he was wont to meet him.

No one ever saw him alive again. At about nine o'clock that morning a man named Allen, hunting up a cow that had gone astray, and riding through the ti-tree scrub near Picnic Point, saw a tall form clad in the tight breeches strapped and gaitered in the manner of the bushman—a form of dress Gordon always affected even in the city—and clad in a velvet jacket, lying in a little open place under the trees. He was riding past, thinking the man asleep, when he was startled by the open stare of the blue eyes, and hastily dismounting he discovered the poet's still and rigid body with its white upturned face. The rifle rested with its muzzle on his breast and towards his jaw. Beside it lay a forked ti-tree branch with which, when the muzzle was in his mouth, he had contrived to push the trigger. Near him was his soft felt hat with the brim uppermost, and lying on it a shilling and his pipe. With the swell of the sea-spray in his ears, and amid the clouds of his own smoke-drift,

and with the foliage concealing him all round, he had spent his last meditative moments. Then he had quietly stretched himself back for the fatal push. The bullet passed through the brain carrying with it a piece of the skull round as a shilling, and all that was mortal of Adam Lindsay Gordon was left to fill a grave in the Brighton cemetery. That very morning the booksellers were placing on their counters for sale the last volume from that pen which was now laid aside for ever.

A few friends followed his remains to their quiet resting-place, where 'hearsed with pines, the night-wind sings its immemorial hymn', in the Brighton cemetery. The 'Yorick' Club was represented, but Kendall was not of the party. He told McCrae afterwards that his absence was due to his 'copperlessness', but it is more likely it was owing to his grief and shock at the news. Gordon's wife returned to her people in South Australia, and three years after Lindsay Gordon's death married Mr. Peter Low, and still lives with her present husband on a farm which forms part of the Canniwigra Station, near Border Town, which once belonged to Mr. George Riddoch.

She has seven sons and daughters living, and she still, although sixty-eight years of age, retains the love of horses which she shared with her first husband. She states that some day her son, William, intends to publish a life of the poet Gordon, for which he has been long collecting material. He has many of Gordon's manuscripts, some of poems never yet published. She herself has reserved most of her reminiscences for her son's book, which, she says, will contain a faithful story of Gordon's career in Australia, and of his literary work.

Over his remains at Brighton there has been erected a monument, consisting of a broken column, with a massive bluestone base, and rising from a finely rubbed

bluestone pedestal, to each face of which a polished white marble tablet is affixed, bearing the following inscriptions. On the front face :

THE

POET

GORDON

DIED, JUNE 24TH, 1870

AGED 37 YEARS

And on the other faces in the order of their publication, appear the names of his three books :

SEA-SPRAY

AND

SMOKE-DRIFT.

ASHTAROTH.

BUSH BALLADS

AND

GALLOPING RHYMES.

The fluted Doric column rises to the height of ten feet above the ground. Round it, with its parable of an uncompleted life, is cast a wreath of bay-leaves in white marble.

According to a wish expressed in 'The Sick Stock-rider', it was evidently his desire to slumber 'where the wattle blossoms wave, with never stone or rail to fence my bed'. To a certain extent the wish has been granted. There is a tall black wattle which in spring is literally covered in bloom ; there is no rail to fence the grave, nor is it needed, for the wattle and the column are all that is necessary to remind the visitor of the sad fate of him who sleeps beneath.

Mr. William Moore has written in his *City Sketches* that 'the planting of a wattle on Gordon's grave was done at the instigation of a lady who knew Gordon as a young man, when the poet was following the occupation of horse-breaking in the south-eastern district of South Australia. Her home was at Collemberra Swamp, thirty miles inland from the circling shores of Lacepede Bay, and here Gordon was the guest of her father during the fitful occasions he came that way. The house at Collemberra Swamp, a pioneer homestead, established away back in 1849, was eventually deserted by the family'. In his unfinished poem called 'The Old Station', which is included in Appendix No. I, *post*, in its third and fourth verses, and again in its penultimate one, Gordon makes reference to this place, and incidentally records his first meeting with the lady we have mentioned. Mr. Moore continues: 'The first wattle cutting sent by Gordon's friend died, but two more that were planted flourished, and grew luxuriantly for many years; then a storm came and one alone remained to wave its gold above the grave. The surviving tree is of great height, and against the deep green of an adjacent pine its branches, which sway with the gentlest breeze, are thrown out in bright relief.' The grave is situated near that of George Higinbotham; and Mr. William Trainor, his fast friend in his early Australian years, who regards his memory still with a reverence amounting almost to worship, and who, during the time that he knew him, served and companied him with an almost spaniel-like devotion, bought the allotment next to Gordon's, so that some day he may rest beside his dead friend.

Eighteen years later another monument was erected to Gordon's memory at Mount Gambier—the obelisk, which is about twenty feet high, the lowest base being of grey dolomite, rock-faced, and having a fifteen-inch

plinth ; it is on the site of the famous leap above the Port MacDonnell Road, at an elevation that renders it visible from nearly every point of the Mount Gambier and Lake Reserves. It bears on the front the words, 'Adam Lindsay Gordon.'

The leap, to which reference is here made, was his famous jump with 'Red Lancer' between the Blue and Leg of Mutton Lakes of Mount Gambier. 'Bruni,' a well-known contributor to the *Australasian*, describes the spot thus :

'Immediately below is the pretty little Leg of Mutton Lake, with the cottage and nursery of the forester at one end, a low ridge separating it from the large valley lake, which extends to the far end of the great crater-like depression in which these lakes lie. At the western end of this basin, the highest peak of the hill rises almost perpendicularly from the water's edge. Black volcanic rocks are seen all the way to the summit, with scarcely a trace of vegetation on the rugged surface. Following the metalled road about a quarter of a mile further, I reached the path trending to the right which leads to the summit of the Mount. It was near this spot that the late A. L. Gordon . . . jumped his horse in and out of the fence that runs round the Blue Lake. The fence, though of a good height and strongly made, is one that any ordinary hunter could clear with ease, but the feat is rendered extremely dangerous owing to the small space on the lake side of the fence for a horse to land and take off again. The slightest mistake would have hurled horse and rider into the lake two hundred feet below. It is just such a thing as Gordon would have done in those days.'

Mr. J. Howlett-Ross describes the occasion thus :

'The poet and some sporting friends from Victoria were riding in the neighbourhood, and the conversation turned on feats of horsemanship witnessed in the vicinity. Gordon was immediately inflamed with a desire to perform a feat that he felt sure none of his

friends would dare emulate. He carried "Red Lancer" over the fence, and, by leaping from rock to rock, cleared a chasm more than forty feet wide, the noble horse seeming to be inspired with the fearless courage of its rider.'

Mrs. Peter Low adds 'that it was really a "pounding" exhibition. He had challenged the party to jump all the obstacles he cleared. Up till that jump the other riders had done as well as he, but when he came to the spot now marked by the obelisk, he cleared the fence on the edge of the lake and then jumped out again. He must almost have turned his horse in the air, for the landing was very narrow. No one followed him in that leap.' These 'pounding' exhibitions were a form of amusement which commended themselves to Gordon's reckless and dare-devil spirit. On one occasion, Sir Frank Madden says, 'A certain Mick Pender, on a horse called "Illumination", challenged Gordon to one of these contests, and, but for the intervention of the authorities, intended to lead him over the parapet at Princes Bridge into the Yarra.' On another occasion, he remembers, Jim Kelly of Kyneton played on Gordon's short-sightedness in one of these 'pounding' exhibitions by challenging him to jump over a post and rail fence, on the other side of which was a large dam. He himself faced the jump in such a fashion that his horse only leaped over the corner of the dam at an oblique angle. He then rode round the dam and jumped back at a similar angle at the other corner of the water. Gordon, however, not knowing the device, and, believing that Kelly had jumped straight over and back, put his horse at the rail with dire results for himself. His valour in this, as in other contests, was largely due to the experience that he had had of breaking horses in his early years in South Australia. This was at that time a tremendous business,

as there were no locally-bred horses, and only thoroughbreds were imported, in order to break for mustering the cattle. They were not touched for this purpose till they were four years old, and as no hand had been laid on them practically since the time they were gelded, and as they were generally required in the short space of three days after they were first handled, it required centaurs like Gordon and his friends to tackle them. Sir Frank Madden says that Gordon and Inspector Nicholson, the father of the present Mayor of Prahran, and of Kelly Gang fame, were the two finest examples of manly valour that he has ever seen, and in proof of this quality in Gordon relates the following story:

'When Gordon was in the police he was sent to arrest a desperate criminal, whom thirty of his friends had sworn to prevent falling into the hands of the law. At last he was located in a certain hut in which he and his comrades had gathered, and Gordon was warned that it was impossible that he should enter the hut and leave it alive. His reply was, "Oh, I shall arrest him all right!" He had no revolver with him, but an old pepper-box, which he carried in his pocket, somewhat resembled the mouth of a revolver, and holding this in his hand he entered the hut, and, marching up to the man seated at the head of the table, he clapped it to his forehead with the words, "Are you so and so?" (naming him), and on the man signifying that he was, Gordon's answer was, "I arrest you in the Queen's name," and leading him out through his cowed friends, he slung him on to his horse and rode away with him.'

Thus ends our record of one 'not unworthy of his monuments—not unworthy of a warm place in the hearts of all those who have any love of bold manhood and spirit-stirring song; one who is indeed an altogether remarkable figure in the first half-century of Victorian life'.

It is proposed to erect a statue to him in the streets of Melbourne, where his brief troubled life drew to its

premature and stormy close, but his enduring monument is in the ever-increasing recognition accorded to him as the real founder of a national school of Australian poetry. Without question, however, his is one of the most picturesque and tragic literary lives which have yet been lived under the Southern Cross. Its romance will always fascinate men and draw their thoughts back to one who at the end went 'dispiritedly, glad to finish', but who merits Kendall's description of him as

A shining soul with syllables of fire,
Who sang the first great songs these lands can claim.

III. THE MAKING OF GORDON

A. His Debt to English Literature

The sources of Gordon's poetry have for the most part been dismissed by the critics with few words, yet we can scarcely understand the 'making' of Gordon without taking account of these—so true is it that, as one critic has written, 'he owed more to Byron and Browning, Tennyson and Swinburne, than to Australia or to anything Australian.' It is therefore to these four poets that we must look, if we would discover 'the reddened sources' from which he drew his inspiration. To these four, however, Marcus Clarke, in a well-known sentence in his famous Preface, rather fancifully and baselessly, as we think, adds a fifth. Speaking of Gordon's South Australian experiences he writes, 'He lost his capital, and, owning nothing but a love of horsemanship and a head full of Browning and *Shelley*, plunged into the varied life which gold-mining, "over-landing", and cattle-driving affords.'

I. Shelley.—Let us take these five, then, as representing the main external influences exerted over the Australian poet, and first examine this least substantial

debt to Shelley. At first sight Shelley and Gordon seem to have but little in common; the former—'nourished upon starbeams and the stuff of rainbows, and the tempest, and the foam,' as William Watson says,—with his unsurpassed and unsurpassable mastery of metrical resource, stands unassailable as a lyric poet. He has achieved such *tours de force* with metres and rhymes and rhythms that they constitute a standard to themselves. Perhaps other poets have had as deep a 'sense of the mystery of words and their lightest variation in the skein of poetry', but none have had the spontaneous ease of Shelley, or his variety of complex melody. 'His eye,' it has been well said, 'was a prism to all the radiant colouring of verbal imagery.' He, whose lyric poetry stands pre-eminent in our literature, and the entrancing 'nocturnal ether' of whose verse is to other poetry what that poetry is to cold prose, so that we wonder sometimes if he was really a man or a mermaiden, 'an Undine in human form who might one day return to the elements,' stands unapproachable, on the one hand; and on the other, Gordon, who has given us no real lyric poetry at all—though undoubtedly possessed of the true lyrical faculty—with his often crude, unpolished, and jingling, but withal gallant, energetic, and racy verse. He has no reliable sense of rhythm—not much of rhyme; one can never be sure, even in his most careful, conscientious, and ambitious work, that his ear and taste will not play him false. He is apt to drop straight from the stars into the puddles. His exceedingly limited and narrow range of metres means a correspondingly narrow range of thought and emotion, and technically his verse is full of unpardonable and mortal weaknesses.

To draw any parallel between him and Shelley, or to trace any direct debt to that consummate master of poetic expression, would tax even the most ingenious

casuist, and a master of fanciful rhetoric such as Marcus Clarke himself. It is true that Shelley may have fired a train of idealism in the Australian poet, as he has done in the case of so many others—and notably in Browning—without its being easy to trace his influence in detail. None of the records of Gordon's library or of the books to which he had access, either in South Australia or in Brighton, contains special reference to the poems of Shelley; but, as we shall show when we come to deal with his debt to Browning, it may be that it is only in so far as the latter drank in the Shelleyan influence, that Gordon, who certainly in turn was largely moulded by Browning, owes him any debt at all. Of Shelley's influence in the making of the youthful Browning there is no question, and we venture to think in turn that of all the formative influences on the poetry of Gordon, that of Browning is the strongest. It is, therefore, at most, a Shelley filtered through Browning that left his impress on the Australian poet.

II. Byron.—Turning now to Byron, his debt is much more easily traced. There is in Gordon not a little of that 'carelessness and negligent ease' which Sir Walter Scott detected in Byron, and something too of that rapidity, energy, and lyrical resonance which marks the work of the greater poet. It is deficient in subtlety, and often written loosely, and almost at random. Men read Byron—and Gordon in his degree—not for fine phrases, but for the directness of some cry, and above all for the breadth and effectiveness of any utterance of theirs taken as a whole. It is easy to see the kinship in temperament and temper between Gordon and the author of *The Corsair*. After all, Byron's chief appeal will always be in the relief he brings to circumscribed lives. It is not by the prosperous and successful that his power is most felt. It was true in 1814, as it is true

to-day, that men and women who were accessible to no other poetry were accessible to his, and especially to the straitened does he come with his breezy and large horizons, his love of the illimitable and of freedom, and of that in man which dares even to the uttermost. And it is these very qualities which endear Gordon to the Australian bushman in the oppression and isolation and monotony of his life, induced as these qualities are by the spaciousness of the plains, the loneliness of the mountains, and the sense of desolation and melancholy, which, in spite of all that arm-chair critics of him have written, Marcus Clarke was right in affirming to be 'the dominant note of Australian scenery'—not of course in its city-parks, not even in the more or less humanized and accessible and domesticated belt of verdure and habitation that rings our continent, but in its weird, barren, drought-stricken, trackless heart, which the true bushman, and he alone, knows. Into his life, mentally and socially circumscribed, cut off from his kind, Gordon comes with an irresistible appeal, just as Byron came to the slum-bound and the *revoltés* of great cities a century ago. 'It is all very well for the happy and well-to-do to talk scornfully of poetic sentimentality'—in a word, of Byromania. 'Those to whom a natural outlet for their affection'—and social and mental intercourse with their fellows—'is denied know better.' And it is true of Gordon, as Matthew Arnold said it was of Byron, that

> He taught us little, but our soul
> Had *felt* him,

and it is just that 'feeling' that makes the difference between a poet whose technique we admire, and a poet whose verses we love.

It is easy, too, to trace in Gordon something of Byron's diseased egoism, his cynicism and morbidity, though

self-scorn for his weakness rather than boasting is the key-note of Gordon's personal confessions. Certainly he was not guilty of Byron's theatricality or bombast; nor was he *le fanfaron de vices qu'il n'avait pas*, which Byron's most charitable critic declares the latter to have been. Still, believing as we do that Gordon's early life had in it something that warped and stained his outlook in all the after years, some bitterness of his own heart with which a stranger might not intermeddle, some secret which it required all that a man had of courage and endurance to bear and hide, we may find parallelisms between his work and Byron's not a few, points of resemblance which only prove that in Byron, Gordon found an expression, and a method of expression, 'fit and fair and simple and sufficient' for some of his own needs; but it is more than arguable whether, even at moments when he was haunted by the unforgettable past, Gordon consciously drew from Byron the sombre colouring with which he depicted or hinted at these early experiences—whatever they were—that gloomed and embittered him. He is too sincere and unaffected for that. Gordon certainly had a secret painful memory which he kept in a secret place in his life, and as far as the present writer can learn he never—not even to the friendly insistence of Marcus Clarke—lifted the shutter that would have revealed what that secret was. Gordon's attitude to those who would penetrate the mystery of his early years was,

> A peep through my window, if folk prefer;
> But, please you, no foot over threshold of mine!

and if at times the peeper saw or heard glimpses or sounds of that which Gordon so valiantly strove to keep hidden within, it was rather *against* than *with* the poet's will.

The sign-manual of the Byronic influence is not only seen in that mysterious production of the poet's called *Ashtaroth*, although that was apparently inspired not only by a careful study of *Faust*,[1] but also of Byron's *Manfred*. The Norman Baron of the poem, Hugo by name, is swayed by love, partly for learning but more strongly for women. The gentleman in black is also present, under the name of Orion; naturally also a Corsair and an outlaw Count are introduced. Hugo has sold himself to the devil, but, as is usual in such cases, comes out all right in the end. There are the customary paraphernalia to be found in such poems—a convent, a castle, monks, spirits, robbers *et hoc genus omne*. What makes the resemblance to *Faust* still greater is the introduction of a kind of 'Walpurgis Night'. Hugo and Orion enter riding on 'black horses' at midnight in a 'mountainous country overlooking a rocky pass'. It is little wonder under such trying circumstances that Hugo sees strange visions and hears spirits chanting unhallowed songs. The whole poem is a mistake, and is very crudely written. Even Byron, with all his vices of impromptu work, was never guilty of lines such as the following:

> *Eric.* Now, I wonder where he has gone!
> *Hugo.* Indeed, I have not the least idea;
> The man is certainly mad.
> He wedded my sister, Dorothea,
> And used her cruelly bad.

Gordon, moreover, made no secret of the fact that Byron had been a formative influence in his poetic career. When he came into touch with the Rev. Julian Tenison Woods's library—he was then twenty-two—he was, as Mr. Sutherland tells us, 'already well versed in

[1] See Note 26.

Byron, who had been the model of all his early efforts.' To Mr. Howlett-Ross we are indebted for another picture of Gordon, 'walking about the supper-room reciting *Childe Harold* till nearly morning' to the Rev. J. T. Woods. Again, into one of his own 'Prose Sketches', written for the *Australasian*, and handed in to the editor of that paper two days before the tragedy at Brighton Beach, he puts the following fragment of conversation between two fictitious characters, the latter of whom only expresses the poet's own judgement on Byron's place in English literature:

'*Norman.* Don't you like *Mazeppa*, Ned?

'*Thurstan.* *Mazeppa* 's a spirited tale in verse; not a poem, though there are a few snatches of poetry in it, perhaps; besides, *Mazeppa* 's not an Oriental story.

'*Norman.* I hope you're not going to run down Byron.

'*Thurstan.* Not I. Byron will survive the English language, as Homer survived the Greek.'

The good priest, Julian Tenison Woods, with whom Gordon made acquaintance while living at Mount Gambier, gives the following description of one of his rides with the poet, which lifts a veil from one at least of the recesses of Gordon's heart which contained the reasons of his love for Byron:

'One day when riding through the bush with Gordon I pulled up my horse to gather a plant which I noticed by the wayside. We were then in the Tatiara country, not far from Border Town. Gordon watched me with much interest, and told me how sorry he felt that his shortness of sight had prevented him from cultivating the power of observation. He told me that without such a power the greatest poet would be helpless. He then gave a wonderful proof of his extraordinary memory by quoting long passages from various poets, wherein the beauties of nature were described. I noted at the time that his selection included many graceful quotations

from Thomson's *Seasons*. He had spoken of having often envied me my enjoyment of natural history. I asked him did he really think he had occasion to envy any one, seeing the share of natural gifts he himself possessed? He said that he really felt far from contented. He was often subject to a restless sort of discontent, which at times almost impelled him to the idea of putting an end to the weariness of life. This, he explained, was a sort of melancholy to which much of the finest poetry owed its existence. He quoted Byron and other names that I now forget in support of his theory, and then added that the study of nature was just the thing which was calculated to correct this morbid feeling. This conversation made a deep impression on me, for I connected it with those sad and moody fits which grew upon him more and more. He was very silent and thoughtful in these times, and often failed to hear half of what was said to him.'

Gordon too had certainly, even as Byron, 'the damning inevitable sign of a man born to wear the golden tassel,'—for he was an aristocrat at heart—viz. the vice of impromptu work which, like Byron, Gordon steadily refused to polish, to file, or to furbish. Byron said in this connexion, 'I am like the tiger; if I miss the first spring I go growling back to my jungle. There is no second. I can't correct and I won't.' It was after this fashion that Gordon wrote. Mr. Trainor tells how, one night as he fell asleep, he saw the poet still fully dressed reaching out for a pencil and some scraps of paper which, when he himself woke the next morning, the poet had just completed his task of filling with the lines of the well-known poem 'From the Wreck', and it was never afterwards altered or touched by Gordon, except for the omission of the last four lines referred to in Note 14. Readers of *Sea Spray and Smoke Drift*, however, will not need any one to point out how closely at times Gordon followed his 'model' in these earlier poems. But here,

as in all these estimates of his obligation to other poets, we would not have it understood that Gordon plagiarized from Byron or any one else. There are points of contact in the poet and the poems, but such plagiarism always vindicates itself. The truth is, that not once nor twice, nor here nor there, is an idea or a figure borrowed, but that Gordon in his youth passed, as many poets have done, so under the spell of Byron's vital, vigorous, flowing verse and picturesque personality that it became impossible not to reproduce him.

III. SWINBURNE.—The influence of Swinburne on Gordon must be bracketed with that of Byron, and on the whole the position may be summed up by saying, that the influence of both was a baneful and unhealthy one for such a temperament as that to which Gordon was heir. Apart from the poems specially mentioned in the Notes to this edition, the observant reader will find in Gordon very much of the manner of Swinburne, especially in that powerful poem, 'The Three Friends,' which is a translation from the French of Alfred de Musset almost entirely in the Swinburnian style. This poem could scarcely be excelled in the original, and it seems to us to surpass in power and terseness even the best of Swinburne's erotic poems. Also in the 'Dedication' to the *Bush Ballads*, one of Gordon's most beautiful pieces of writing, he has copied very closely the versification and phraseology of Swinburne. That poem will certainly compare very favourably with anything the poet ever wrote.

In the magnificent poem, too, entitled 'The Swimmer', where we are held spellbound by the melancholy beauty of the verses—beauty which our great English maker of music, Sir Edward Elgar, has enshrined in a powerful and original setting in his fine song-cycle of 'Sea-Pictures'—the influence of that master of alliteration

and assonance is clearly visible. In that poem Gordon gives fresh utterance to the soul-hungry prayer of the Psalmist—'Oh that I had wings like a dove and could flee away and be at rest'. From Swinburne, Gordon learned that love of the sea, which makes the former one of the greatest, if not the greatest, sea-poet in our English speech. Gordon loved all sport based on fighting, and every splendid contest, whether of men fighting or of horses racing, and equally, the 'bloodshot swordblade' of the dying sun, and the 'brave white horses' of the sea, seemed to thrill his heart's heart. It is strange to notice how his melancholy musings and his desire to be at rest are at times broken in upon by this unappeasable love for movement and conflict. Like the Brahmin, he wished to attain Nirvana, but to gain it he would make one last terrific struggle, and that struggle to him would be no less a joy than the rest it brought. He is indeed almost truculent at times in his sense of the infinite value of struggle and contest. In this, however, Gordon is more closely akin to Browning than to Swinburne. The poem ends with that splendid apostrophe to the sea, mouthed in the grand old Berserker spirit and with the strong yearning of the Viking, who longed to end his days on the stormy element where he had lived and fought:

Oh! brave white horses! you gather and gallop,
The storm sprite loosens the gusty reins;
Now the stoutest ship were the frailest shallop,
In your hollow backs, or your high arch'd manes.
I would ride as never a man has ridden,
In your sleepy, swirling surges hidden,
To gulfs foreshadow'd through straits forbidden,
Where no light wearies and no love wanes.

Gordon uses alliteration, too, even more than Swin-

burne does—which is saying much Such lines, for instance, as

Flickers, flutters, flags, and falters
Feebly, like a waning lamp,

from 'Podas Okus': or

Weary and wasted, and worn and wan,
Feeble and faint, and languid and low,

from the poem called 'Gone', are two of the many illustrations that rise to one's mind, though not behind these is

Rapine and ruin and rape lie around thee,

from 'Bellona'.

IV. Tennyson.—From what has been already said it might be anticipated that Gordon would have much sympathy with the old knightly times, such as existed in the days of the Round Table, when adventurous spirits went forth they knew not whither and encountered they cared not what—such times as Tennyson has made his own in the *Idylls of the King*. Such poems as 'The Rhyme of Joyous Garde' and 'The Romance of Britomarte' testify to this, though in the former the influence of Swinburne, and in the latter of Macaulay and the 'Border-Ballads', which Gordon knew almost by heart, are also visible. They are full of life, and the poet's heart beats in harmony with their stirring stories. And greater than either, perhaps, as the Rev. J. J. Malone points out in his Essay on Gordon, published by the Australian Catholic Truth Society, is that 'magnificent ballad', which 'breathes the very spirit of the knightly days of chivalry', viz. 'Fauconshawe', in which the story is told with great dramatic vigour.

'It is a complete poem, perhaps the most finished composition he ever wrote. . . . The whole tragic story is

told as the story of Francesca da Rimini by Dante, with such dramatic abruptness: its situations are so sudden and so unexpected: there is such vividness and vigour in every movement, the interest is so sustained to the very end, the spirit of it is so true to the genius of the period, the swift treachery of it, the late repentance, the defiant scorn of despair in its Lady Mabel, and the subdued passion and chivalrous determination of the stern and unbending knight, make the whole poem worthy of the pen of a master. If Gordon had written nothing more than that ballad of "Fauconshawe" it would entitle him to high rank as a poet.'

Otherwise, as might also be anticipated, Gordon's rough and ready verse, 'the verse being as the mood it paints', has not much in common with the consummate artistry of Tennyson. Yet here and there in Gordon the artistic finish of which the late Laureate was such a past-master is not lacking. In the last line of the first quatrain of 'The Sick Stockrider', there is an illustration of the pictorial effect of alliteration and assonance,—in a word, of onomatopoeia,—which Tennyson himself need not have been ashamed to have wrought:

All through the hot, slow, sleepy, silent ride—

where you get a very artful and effective idea of slowness, heat, exhaustion and thirst. There is also a very palpable use of the metre of *Locksley Hall* in 'The Road to Avernus'.

V. Browning.—It is, however, when we come to deal with the poet's debt to Browning that we strike the deepest note in Gordon's verse. To the influence of Browning, Australia—which loves the jingling rhymes, the living pictures, the rough-hewn language of Gordon, while its predilection for Browning is to say the least somewhat masked—owes more than it thinks. The very forms in which Gordon expresses himself—forms that make his words sing themselves in one's head for days—are forms of a school of poetry which

without Browning would not have been. Gordon too has learned not only the forms of the master, but he has learned and appropriated and popularized in some degree the deeper power of Browning, which, at one period in their careers at least, makes Browning's admirers Browning's slaves. No one who has read even a little of both these poets can question for one moment the resemblance between them. There are lines in Gordon which simply startle the lover of Browning. One instance will inevitably recur to the reader, but may well be quoted at this point, though as we hope to show, it is but one of many. Side by side with Gordon's melancholy, especially in his earlier poems, no one can doubt there exists the glorious sense of existence, 'the wild joys of living,' as Browning calls it in 'Saul', which is so characteristic of the greater poet. This too at times thrills Gordon, and rushes through his veins into his verse with a vitality which infects the reader. Put alongside the passage from 'Saul', from which the above quotation is made, certain stanzas from the seventh 'Fytte' of Gordon's 'Ye Wearie Wayfarer', and though Browning's theme is not the joy of the horseman specially as Gordon's is, yet in both is the same thought expressed in curiously similar language, 'How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ all the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!' And here is Gordon's rendering of the same rapture:

Oh! the vigour with which the air is rife!
The spirit of joyous motion;
The fever, the fullness of animal life,
Can be drain'd from no earthly potion!
The lungs with the living gas grow light.
And the limbs feel the strength of ten,
While the chest expands with its madd'ning might,
GOD'S GLORIOUS OXYGEN.

Thus the measur'd stroke, on elastic sward,
Of the steed three parts extended,
Hard held, the breath of his nostrils broad,
With the golden ether blended;
Then the leap, the rise from the springy turf,
The rush through the buoyant air,
And the light shock landing—the veriest serf
Is an emperor then and there.

And certainly Gordon's closing words may be compared with the rejected lover's cry in Browning's 'The Last Ride Together':

I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night?

Much independent and external evidence exists of Gordon's love for and study of the great poet of the nineteenth century. Mrs. N. A. Lord, in an article contributed more than twenty years ago to the *Adelaide Observer*, gave some interesting reminiscences of Gordon's life at Mount Gambier. In this connexion she says: 'He liked Browning too, and would repeat long pieces from any poem he admired in a strange, deep, monotonous voice, and with such a fire burning in his dark cavernous eyes.' Mr. Alexander Sutherland also tells us that, when Gordon first came to settle in Brighton, which he chose for his home because of his love for the sea, he took furnished rooms in the house of a man named Kelly, who was gardener at that time to George Higinbotham, afterwards the great Chief Justice of Victoria. One of the advantages of this residence was that he became acquainted with Higinbotham, who had a singularly simple and unostentatious warmth of feeling that made him readily obliging in a multitude of little ways, and

out of his excellent library he lent to Gordon, through the gardener, many a book which the bookless poet greatly prized. 'In this way,' says Mr. Sutherland, 'Gordon greatly enlarged his reading, especially of the poets, and made much fuller acquaintance with Browning and Swinburne.' In the few pieces of prose writing which we have from the pen of Gordon,—sketches contributed to the *Australasian*,—there is also abundant testimony of the fact that Gordon had steeped himself in the language and thought of Browning. The paper called 'Bush Sketches' ends with a quotation from Browning's 'Apparent Failure'. Another of them is called 'The Ring and the Books', which is rather a base use to which to put the title of Browning's great epic, and its first paragraph is as follows:

'There is not much in a name, perhaps, but I prefer a good one when it costs nothing, and the palpable plagiarism of my title will hardly attract the notice of those by whom my article will be read, since the story of Pompilia is probably a sealed book to them, and a ring into which they care not to intrude.'

There are three entire poems in which the most striking correspondence between the poets makes itself felt. The first and best known of these is that between Gordon's ride 'From the Wreck' and Browning's 'How we brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix', but there are two others equally striking—those between 'Wolf and Hound' and 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came', on the one hand, and between 'Laudamus' and 'Evelyn Hope' on the other. In all these three poems there is at once manifest a striking contrast as well as evident agreement. The likenesses between the first twin-pair of these are too patent to need exposition.

'Childe Roland' is the story of a soul,—'my soul, your soul, any one's soul', as Browning put it,—marching on

its lone way through an awful, shabby and hungry land—the eerie, half-starved aspect of the earth in the poem with what Mr. Chesterton calls 'the sense of scrubbiness' in Nature, making it one of the most ghastly and most powerful things of its kind in modern literature—to its goal, 'the dark Tower'. The poem is vague, as befits a spiritual allegory of the soul's quest and achievement, so vague that Browning said of it 'It means for each man what each man finds in it'. Gordon has translated this parable of the soul's aspiration and conquest into the story of a hunt after a bush-ranger. His intention that the reader should not miss the resemblance to Browning is conclusively proven by his setting of two of the lines of Browning's poem at the head of his own verse:

> The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
> Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay.

But the whole language of Gordon bears the impress of his 'model'. Instead of Browning's 'hoary cripple with malicious eye' we have the picture of the 'splitters who would swear through a ten-inch board'. The natural scenery—'the dry swamps', the 'low grey rocks girt round', 'the blood-red sunset', the peaks to the westward 'dyed black on a curtain of crimson cloth', the men 'caged like beasts for a fight'—is practically common to the two poems. 'Childe Roland' is afraid that the 'ghastly something close to the water's edge' may be a dead man's cheek; Gordon's hunters find that the horrible 'something' is the print of a 'horse's shoe and a rider's boot' which 'had left clean prints on the clay'.

In the Note (p. 382) to 'Laudamus', at the end of this book, the verbal similarities between that poem and 'Evelyn Hope' are set out, and though the contrast between the exquisite peacefulness of the latter and the

tragic scene in the death-chamber of the former, is striking enough, yet the parallelism between the two poems is still more so.

The fact is that Gordon has so assimilated the Browningesque spirit and atmosphere that without conscious plagiarism he has 'learned his great language, caught his clear accents and made him his pattern' not only in form but in substance.

The *titles* of Gordon's poems are, for example, singularly Browningesque. If we set them out in parallel columns their close resemblance becomes at once manifest, thus:

Browning	Gordon
Tertium Quid	Quare Fatigasti-
Now	Gone
Summum Bonum	Cui Bono
Saul	Delilah
Memorabilia	Hippodromania
De Gustibus	De Te
Instans Tyrannus	Ars Longa
Dis Aliter Visum	In Utrumque Paratus
Prospice	Laudamus *or* Confiteor
Too Late	No Name
The Death in the Desert	A Song of the Surf
Time's Revenges	Borrowed Plumes
Arcades Ambo	Vae Victis

We have, from Gordon's own 'Prose Sketches' already quoted, indisputable evidence that, up to the date of the appearance in Australia of 'The Ring and the Book', i.e. up till 1869, Gordon was a reader and student of Browning, and though some of the titles of Browning's poems quoted in the above list are subsequent to that date, yet the list as a whole betrays a singular formal resemblance between the poets.

But in Gordon's *language* the resemblance is still more noteworthy. He uses alliteration, as we have seen, as much as Swinburne, and even more constantly than Browning, and his whole play of words is suggestive of Browning in its lack of conventionality. In their mode and power of rhyming the two stand almost alone. Both of them have a marvellous facility in the art, and can make rhymes in spite of the limitations of English speech. The thought of each poet sweeps on, and it is a sorry day for both if it has to be deflected for the purpose of a musical ending, for both can bend impossible combinations into rhyme to suit their purposes. Both can rhyme, and do rhyme continually, in two and even three syllables. Nothing could be more like Browning than the jingle of Gordon's 'double-bank us' to rhyme with 'Plancus', or 'rail am' to rhyme with 'Balaam', or 'wide on' to rhyme with 'Sidon'; and if Browning has shocked the ears of some of his superfine critics by making 'Manchester' rhyme with 'haunches stir', or 'explosive' with 'O sieve', or 'promise' with 'from mice', Gordon has also severely shocked one of his editors by rhyming 'nor shun' with 'caution', 'sweet sure' with 'creature', and, perhaps we may add even more oddly, 'Lady Mary' to rhyme with 'military', and 'ship shun' to rhyme with 'Egyptian'. Both poets—Browning in 'The Grammarian's Funeral', and Gordon in the 'Dedication' to 'Bush Ballads'—have lit upon the same rhyme (with a difference) for 'loosened'; Browning being hilariously thankful to think of 'dew send', while Gordon with equal gratitude haps on "dews end'.

Neither poet is in the least circumscribed by the fact that the English language provides no rhyme. The manner in which Latin phrases, and sometimes French ones, take their places in the swing of the stanzas of

both is, as Gordon might have put it, ' a caution to see.' Thus Gordon, momentarily troubled by the fact that the word ' result ' is clamouring for a rhyme to complete his verse, is quite happy when he sees ahead of him such a Latin phrase as ' quem perdere vult ', or ' prius ' to rhyme with ' nigh us ', or ' fremuerunt ' with ' inherent '. Similar instances will occur to the minds of all readers of Browning. Sometimes, in this passion for rhyme, words are broken off in the middle. Sometimes they are made to rhyme with English ; sometimes they are translated ; sometimes laughed at ; sometimes unwarrantable liberty taken with their pronunciation. Of course it is not to be expected that Gordon has either the vast vocabulary or the erudition of Browning—that most catholic-minded poet of our language, with his colossal knowledge of the byways and dark ends and unfrequented alleys of history, and, as Walter Savage Landor pointed out, with ' tongue so varied in discourse ', as to make Chaucer alone comparable with him. But many lines in Gordon betray their paternity in unmistakable fashion ; they are sealed of the tribe of Browning. A line like

Mere guesswork and blank enigma

might have strayed from almost any part of ' The Ring and the Book '.

Gordon's language, too, is terse and packed like Browning's. The accusation made against Browning by John Sterling, when *Paracelsus* first appeared, was that he was guilty of ' verbosity ', and it seems to have been one of the few criticisms that left its impress on Browning ; the consequence was that in his desire to avoid an overplus of words he often does not put in enough words to make his meaning clear, and in this Gordon is sometimes not far behind him. Both poets revel in antithesis and apposition ; both are fearlessly vivid ; in both we

have 'learned dictionary words giving a hand to street-slang'; in both at times something of the 'wind-in-the-orchard style, that tumbled down here and there an appreciable fruit with uncouth bluster'. Both coin words in German fashion to suit their ideas; both make free use of dashes, and Gordon even betrays sometimes the Browningesque propensity which

> Loves to dock the smaller parts of speech,
> As we curtail the already curtailed cur.

Nouns, adjectives, and verbs pile themselves into sentences in both not always easy to analyse. An apostrophe like 'God we have sinned!' in Gordon's 'From Lightning and Tempest' reminds one of the similar absence of interjection in Browning's 'Christ God who savest man!' from 'Count Gismond', and who else—unless it were either Browning or Charles Stuart Calverley parodying him—would have begun a poem with

> Am I waking? Was I sleeping?
> Dearest, are you watching yet?

'Christmas Eve' need only be set side by side with almost any poem that Gordon has written to test the accuracy of the above comparisons. Both poets often light on the one right word, and their language is apt and expressive enough, but neither of them is the least afraid of language; each sometimes catches sight of a thought far ahead of him or a fancy breaking through language to escape, and straightway, forgetting all else, they plunge forward to lay hands on it, regardless of grammar and punctuation and consecution of words left all in wrack behind them.

But there is between the two a much stronger bond than that of mere language. The *subjects* of which they love best to write prove them still more akin than any external resemblances of speech could do. Of course

Browning's range is much more extensive than Gordon's. The marvellous width of Browning's thought, with its limitless horizons, is one of his chief characteristics. No subject comes amiss to him; he is the child of the nineteenth century culture; the heir of all the ages that have preceded him; and as far as out-of-the-way and recondite knowledge is concerned stands without peer in English literature. As one of his critics has said, 'No poet has exhibited such variety,' and this variety springs from the multiplicity of subjects in which he is interested. In his company you 'see from the prosaic eminence of a London common the overthrow of Sodom and the dread vision of the Last Judgement, as in the wonderful poem called "Easter Day"; you sail in Venetian gondolas witnessing the drama of passion and crime; you hide with conspirators in the ruined aqueducts of modern Italy; the scene changes from the Ghetto to the Morgue; from the byways of London to the deserts of Arabia; from the tent of Saul to the plains of "glorious guilty Babylon"; from the Shambles' Gate, where the patriot rides out to death upon his hurdle, to the splendid chambers of the connoisseur, crowded with the spoils of Renaissance art, where the Bishop orders his tomb in St. Praxed's.' He gives to his readers 'a largess universal like the sun'.

For any trace of his passion for music and painting, of his minute and accurate knowledge of all things imaginable, of his tastes for politics and history—especially the history of unknown men and the politics of little-studied countries—we shall, of course, look vainly in the small books of the Australian poet. It could not be otherwise. Browning lived beyond the allotted span of human life, and for three-quarters of a century was student and artist; Gordon died at thirty-seven, a bushman. Browning is steeped in the literary and

artistic atmosphere of Italy—his poems breathe the classic air of the most classic lands in the world ; Gordon, 'sitting loosely in the saddle all the while,' rode along the tracks of a land with no past, composing his verses as he rode along with his leg thrown over his saddle-pommel to make a desk ; writing his songs in an Australia that had no literary or artistic atmosphere, and 'by the long wash of Australasian seas' that had never before been sung. Yet the favourite subjects of Gordon's muse are all especial favourites of Browning.

Nothing, for example, is more thoroughly a part of Gordon than his love of horsemanship. Mr. James Moloney ventures on the dictum that 'Gordon hated Australia, and everything Australian, in his most typical moments, and his love for the horse and the cult of the horse was the one point of contact between him and the land of his adoption.' Now that love of horsemanship is so thoroughly characteristic of Browning, that one may well imagine it formed the earliest, if not the strongest, point of contact between Gordon and the English poet. The author of 'How we brought the Good News', 'The Last Ride Together', and 'Through the Metidja to Abd-el-kadr', could not but attract the author of 'Hippodromania', 'How we beat the Favourite', and 'From the Wreck'. The motto of 'Hippodromania' might have been Browning's 'Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.' Such a point needs no elaboration. There is prominent in both the keen love of riding for its own sake, and the sense of sympathy between man and horse which only true horsemen know. It is in this spirit that Gordon writes :

> So the coward will dare on the gallant horse
> What he never would dare alone,
> Because he exults in a borrowed force,
> And a hardihood not his own.

The sense of movement, and the sound expressing the sense of movement in an almost cinematographic fashion, as far as riding is concerned, perhaps find their highest level in Browning's and Gordon's equine poems. That power and artistry, which Browning employs in 'Ivan Ivanovitch' to express the onrush of the wolves after the sledge, are paralleled by the fierce joy of the breathless pace of Gordon's rider in 'How we beat the Favourite'.

Again both poets love, above all sky scenes at least, the sunset. Attention has already been drawn to the similarity between the 'curtain of crimson cloth' in 'Wolf and Hound', and the lurid glow of the setting sun in 'Childe Roland'; but this is only one of many illustrations that might be adduced of their common love of that natural phenomenon. The sunset in 'Sordello'

> A last remains of sunset dimly burned
> O'er the far forests, like a torch-flame turned
> By the wind back upon its bearer's hand
> In one long flare of crimson; as a brand,
> The woods beneath lay black;

or that in 'Rabbi Ben Ezra'—

> For note, when evening shuts,
> A certain moment cuts
> The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:
> A whisper from the west
> Shoots—'Add this to the rest,
> Take it and try its worth: here dies another day',

and a dozen others will readily suggest similar scenes in the Australian poet, and notably that great description of the sun sinking behind the sea from 'Visions in the Smoke':

But the red sun sank to his evening shroud,
Where the western billows are roll'd,
Behind a curtain of sable cloud,
With a fringe of scarlet and gold;
There's a misty glare in the yellow moon,
And the drift is scudding fast,
There'll be storm, and rattle, and tempest soon,
When the heavens are overcast.
The neutral tint of the sullen sea
Is fleck'd with the snowy foam,
And the distant gale sighs drearilie,
As the wanderer sighs for his home.

There are four times as many sunsets in Gordon as there are pictures of dawn or daybreak. Both poets also are in love with the sea, especially with its changes of storm and calm, its dread secrets, its unintelligible roar and moan. Gordon lived in South Australia beside the Southern Ocean, and many an hour he spent in solitary meditation by the seashore, and who shall tell the 'long, long thoughts' of the poet as he looked out on the 'unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea' that separated him from the old home and the old life? Gordon certainly owes much to Swinburne in this respect, but with Gordon as with Browning, the sea and the sunset are something more than subjects of admiration. Each of them feels a living sympathy existing between Nature in these aspects and himself.

Greek, and even Hebrew, literature has a prominent place in the writings of each of the poets. The part that Greek literature played in Browning's songs and stories and dramas is one of the most considerable factors in his writings. Gordon's 'Podas Okus', his projected poem dealing with 'Penthesilea', Queen of the Amazons,[1] his many references to Greek history and mythology, and

[1] See Note 1.

his Homeric epithets, show how this same attraction for Hellenic literature laid hold of him. But still more striking is the Hebrew element in both poets. Browning's 'Jochanan Hakkadosh', and 'Rabbi Ben Ezra', and 'Solomon and Balkis', are paralleled by Gordon's 'Potter's Clay' and 'Delilah'—the latter poem, by the way, like Browning's 'Guardian Angel', suggested by a picture. The fascination of Old Testament history in both poets is seen, in that Gordon introduces Job and David, Balaam and Gideon, as easily and often as Browning introduces Moses and Aaron, Saul and Abner, while Mother Eve is a favourite with both. In their discussion of matters theological there are evidences of agreement, and Gordon's friend 'Ephraim' and 'Puritan elder', who is of opinion that

> Thou mayest seek
> Recreation singing a psalm,

irresistibly remind us of some of the personages in the 'little Zion Chapel' on the heath in 'Christmas Eve' They have many other common subjects, perhaps the most outstanding of which is the frequent allusions in both to the pleasures of feasting and wine, and if Browning does not lay quite so much stress as Gordon on the 'cool tobacco cloud', or share his enthusiasm for the 'ancient clay', he at least speaks kindly of 'this piece of broken pipe, a shipman's solace erst'. Both poets, too, undoubtedly have that love of action, of movement and of fighting, that

> Riot of chargers, revel of blows,
> And fierce flush'd faces of fighting foes,

of which Gordon writes so well and bravely in 'The Rhyme of Joyous Garde', and which are so prominent in others of his poems.

But the real affinity between them lies much deeper

than either their common language or their common choice of subjects. Gordon has derived from Browning habits of thought, tastes, tendencies, moral and spiritual outlooks, which have left their indelible and revealing marks on all his verse. The freedom of Browning in his poetry is found in some degree in Gordon. The verse of neither disdains the commonest and most insignificant of objects. In this, of course, both Browning and Gordon are more or less typical of the nineteenth century, for the characteristic of that century is, that it is more than any other distinguished by its apotheosis of the insignificant and the common. There is nothing in the universe which may not generate the poetic spark and bring about the instant of incandescence. Even when the introduction of these things is positively comical, or grotesque, they do not scruple to introduce them. Neither poet deals much with abstractions; neither ever forgets the little concrete details, which, to a man who really lives, are more important than any generalizations, however comprehensive, and may suddenly send an arrow through his heart. Both poets take the liberty of introducing their own personalities into their verse, and even pause for a laugh from the reader at their own expense. If Browning could stop to say, 'Why I deliver this horrible verse,' or

> That bard's a Browning; he neglects the form,
> But ah! the sense, ye gods, the weighty sense!

or

> And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,
> Here's a subject made to your hand!

Gordon is no whit behind him, when he pauses with quizzical eye to speak of 'the duffer who writes this lay', or to interject, 'this writing bad verses is very fatiguing!' Both poets quote from, and criticize, other poets as well

as themselves, and in keeping with the suggestion above —that nothing is too small or too slight for their observation—it is noteworthy how the ears, eyes, and nostrils of their horses are drawn with faultless strokes. This, as we have said, is a characteristic of the modern movement in literature. As Mr. Chesterton puts it in his *Robert Browning*, 'whether it be the school of poetry which sees more in one cowslip or clover top than in forests and waterfalls, or the school of fiction which finds something indescribably significant in the pattern of a hearth-rug or the tint of a man's tweed coat, the tendency is the same.' Maeterlinck, Zola, Walt Whitman, George Gissing, Meredith, and Mr. Bernard Shaw, 'different in every other particular, are alike in this, that they have ceased to believe certain things to be important and the rest to be unimportant. They have all become terribly impressed with and a little bit alarmed at the monstrous powers of small things.' Mr. Chesterton thinks this is the 'whole difference' between 'the age that fought with dragons and the age that fights with microbes'. Certainly Gordon, in his description of the clash of stirrups, the foam-flecks on the bull's face as he fronts the toreador, proves himself not unpossessed of the same close powers of scrutiny and love and observation of Nature, which is visible in the author of 'Saul' and 'Karshish'. Both poets, too, in common with another characteristic of the nineteenth century, are under the spell of the *macabre* and the ghastly—a characteristic which culminated in the ghoulish and intensive horror of the weird tales of Edgar Allan Poe. Blood flows and clots, wounds gape, the nostrils and lungs of the drowning man, as in 'The Song of the Surf', are water-filled, quite in Browning's style. The details of death—the cere-cloth, the winding-sheet, the work of the worms in the grave, and the weird realism of such

things—can be found in both poets. The concluding lines of Gordon's 'The Sick Stockrider', where the dead stockman may chance to hear the 'sturdy station children' romping overhead, have their counterpart in Browning's 'prattle of the birds' which

> Amuse the dead awhile,
> If couched they hear beneath the matted camomile,

and who could write more like Browning, without actually copying him, than Gordon in those splendid original lines:

> One gleam like a bloodshot sword-blade swims on
> The sky-line, staining the green gulf crimson,
> A death stroke fiercely dealt by a dim sun,
> That strikes through his stormy winding sheet?

Both poets are exquisitely pure, and yet both have the intense feeling and boldness of description of virile men in dealing with the sensuous. Both, that is to say, have the purity of fire rather than the purity of snow. There is in each a vivid realism, a passionate appreciation, almost intoxicating in its intensity, of sense. The red glow of a woman's lips, as in Gordon's 'No Name', the exquisite whiteness of brow, the curve of arms and neck, and the love of gold hair, are equally felt by both poets. Browning, who could write of the passionate kiss of Ottima in 'Pippa passes' and speak of the 'neck's warmth' in the scarf given to Naddo by Adelaide in 'Sordello', would have loved the 'shoulder's snowy tip' and the 'rose-red lips', which caught and held Gordon's desire; and the latter's description in 'Fauconshawe' of Mabel's ivory white fingers among her raven hair, may be set alongside Browning's 'face like a silver wedge mid the yellow wealth', to show how real such impressions were to them both; and Gordon, no less

than the author of 'A Story of Pornic', dwells with particular affection on

> The golden sunset gleaming
> On your golden gleaming hair.

Both poets, too, show a strong love of colour. This indeed is one of the chief characteristics of Browning. Sometimes, as Ruskin says, 'it is not colour, it is conflagration'; but wherever it is, in the bell of a flower, on the edge of a cloud, on the back of a lizard, on the veins of a lichen, it strikes in Browning's verse at our eyes, and he, most of all our masters of English poetry, joys in the rapture of it. He sees the wild tulip blow out its great red bell; he sees the thin clear bubble of blood at its tip; he sees the spike of gold which burns deep in the bluebell's heart; the corals that like lamps disperse thick red flame through the dusk green universe of the ocean; the moon carried off at sunrise in purple fire; the larch-blooms crisp and pink; the blood-tinctured heart of the pomegranate; the poppies crimson to blackness; the red fans of the butterfly falling on the rock like a drop of fire from a brandished torch; the starfish rose-jacinth to the finger tips; and a hundred other passionate seizures of colour. His landskips also are painted as well as drawn. It is the sudden glow, the splash or flicker of colour, that always makes its swift momentary impress on us as we read. As Mr. Stopford Brooke says, 'Browning had been an impressionist forty years before Impressionism was born in modern art.' His use of 'reds and blues that artist never dreamed of' is paralleled by Gordon's use of the 'blue and the green' in 'Wormwood and Nightshade', and finds another counterpart in the Australian's descriptions of the races, where the 'silks' are so finely and so constantly painted. Gordon, like Browning, can be

searched—and it repays the reader to search them both—for colour impressions. In one of the most typical examples, Browning flings in the black horse at the end much as Gordon does in the 'Dedication' to *Bush Ballads*, and just exactly in the way an artist would do it who loved a flash of black life in the midst of a dead expanse of gold and green, one of those spots of blackness in creation that makes the colours felt :

> Fancy the Pampas' sheen!
> Miles and miles of gold and green
> Where the sunflowers blow
> In a solid glow,
> And—to break now and then the screen—
> Black neck and eyeballs keen,
> Up a wild horse leaps between!

And, as Mr. Brooke also points out, it was the earlier Browning that delighted in this wealth of colour. Indeed Browning 'lost a great deal of the colour of which he was once so lavish' as he grew older; therefore it is the Browning that Gordon knew who has this trait in so marked a fashion. Browning indeed at this period reminds one of the pictures of Tintoret with his madness of colour, black and gold and sombre purple, white mist and barred clouds, and the thunder roar in his skies. Gordon's picture of the salmon, 'lilac, shot through with a silver ray,' might have come from the greater poet, while Gordon's lines from 'The Swimmer' :

> The blue sea over the bright sand roll'd;
> Babble and prattle, and ripple and murmur,
> Sheen of silver and glamour of gold—
> And the sunset bath'd in the gulf to lend her
> A garland of pinks and of purples tender,
> A tinge of the sun-god's rosy splendour,
> A tithe of his glories manifold.

and, still more, his lines

> The crystal expanse of the bay,
> Like a shield of pure metal, lies shining
> 'Twixt headlands of purple and grey,

from 'Ex Fumo Dare Lucem', remind one of the sun-bath'd sea in 'Fifine at the Fair'. Of course, both Browning and Gordon are visibly in Shelley's debt at moments like these.

But the greatest lesson that Gordon learned from Browning, by far the most formative influence in his thought and in the expression of his thought in verse, is the art of what has been called 'Psychological Drama'. The Dramatic Monologue is Browning's most typical contribution to the *form* of literature. It is distinguished from the Soliloquy in that it presupposes the presence of a silent audience to whom the words of the speaker are addressed. That audience may express, by look or gesture, their assent or dissent, their anger or pleasure, at the speaker's utterance; and this unvoiced emotion in the auditors' countenances is reflected in the words spoken, and may even cause the speaker to digress from his main theme to answer or discuss the emotions and feelings of his hearers. This is a form of dramatic utterance which without Browning would never have been, and Gordon learned it early from the master. Of all the inept and amazing criticisms that have been passed upon Browning, who for more than fifty years had to run the gauntlet of shallow critics, not one shows a more fatuous simplicity of outlook, than that which dismisses him from the ranks of the great poets as being 'too philosophical'. To hear such people talk one would imagine that life lay all on the surface of things, that there were no hidden nooks and crannies where 'the deep things of God' might lie, and that the 'more things

in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in its philosophy' were most accurately reproduced in a poetry which involves no thought. Such people

> love to hear
> A soft pulsation in their lazy ear;
> To turn the page, and let their senses drink
> A lay that shall not trouble them to think.

Browning knew better, and possessed his soul in patience waiting for the world to climb up to him, too sure of his rightness to come down to the world. To use his own great figure, he did not blossom lightly into song, but planted deep in the rock-clefts of life a poetry, which

> the after-age
> Knows and names a pine, a nation's heritage.

His concern was with the soul,—its

> Shifting fancies and celestial lights,
> With all its grand orchestral silences
> To keep the pauses of the rhythmic sounds.

He knew that the real drama of life takes place within the soul and not in the realm of external acts. Actions to him only represent the scores in the pauses of the game, the visible result of the unseen mental and moral processes of man; therefore the truest poetry of lives he thought must of necessity be psychological. That is the great and distinctive secret of Robert Browning, and the world is only now beginning to learn it.

Gordon learned it early. In his dramatic poems—and that means almost everything that he has written—the drama is that of processes going on in the soul itself, not in its environment or deeds merely. His 'Road to Avernus', with its striking duel-scene, is like Browning's twin poems 'Before' and 'After', a portrayal of antagonistic *souls*. In the 'Legend of Madrid' we see

a woman's soul quivering in its pain under the faithlessness of a man, just as we see in 'James Lee's Wife' a woman and a man different in temperament and disposition, but in a similar crisis of their lives. Again, in 'Rippling Water' and 'The Old Leaven', we have the same deterioration of soul, and the same reason assigned for that deterioration, as we have in 'Dis Aliter Visum'. Or we may compare Browning's 'The Worst of It' with Gordon's 'The Rhyme of Joyous Garde', because they each display the same fiery action and reaction of thought. Both poets, too, know the power of physical terror or panic to make 'the spirit's true endowments stand out plainly from its false ones', to drag out the masked truth from beneath the falsity of the outward seeming; this is delineated in Gordon's 'Lightning and Tempest' much as it is in Browning's 'Caliban', and in 'Adam, Lilith, and Eve'. In fact it is not too much to say that Gordon believes as firmly as Browning in what Mr. Chesterton finely calls 'the Doctrine of the Great Hour', in which

> Just this or that poor impulse,
> Which for once had play unstifled,
> Seems the sole work of a life-time
> That away the rest have trifled.

Especially do both poets apply this doctrine to the power of a great sin, a great hate, but above all a great love, to test and try the essential man or woman beneath the outward show. The resemblances between Browning's 'Cristina' and Gordon's 'No Name' are alluded to in the Notes to the latter poem; but numerous instances will occur to the minds of readers of both poets. It enters, of course, into far more poems of Browning than it does of Gordon; it is the great moral of 'The Ring and the Book', and is, as Mr. Chesterton says, 'the mainspring of a great part of his poetry taken as a

whole.' It is the central idea of 'The Statue and the Bust', where a crime frustrated by cowardice brings the touchstone to two lives. Even where the poets part company,—Browning voicing 'the utterances of so many imaginary souls—not mine', Gordon delivering over with mournful iteration the sad tale of his own heart,—Gordon carries the master's 'great lesson' with him. The keen psychological analysis and construction, which marks the 'Men and Women' of Browning's books, and makes them live their lives, and love their loves, and hate their hates as real men and women do, is visible no less in Gordon, though it is *himself* that he analyses so relentlessly and often, and which makes his own life-tragedy, which culminated at Brighton Beach, the unforgettable memory which his book leaves with us.

It is just at this point that they part irrevocably. The one takes the 'high road' to the hills of hope, where the sunlight falls and the breezes play, and the other takes the 'low road' that ends in disillusionment and despair. Had Gordon learned but one more lesson from the great Teacher at whose feet he had so often sat, there would have been no suicide at Brighton Beach; and the whole tone of the immediately succeeding generation of Australian poets might have been different. As it is, Gordon, who has left his impress so deeply on men like A. B. Paterson, Henry Lawson, John Farrell, Edward Dyson, Barcroft Boake, and others of what are known in Australia as the 'Bulletin' bards, seems to have begun a wail of pessimism, cynicism, and hopelessness whose echoes have not yet ceased to vibrate. In Gordon's impatience of restraint, and that settled melancholy of his, he has close affinity with Edgar Allan Poe, for whom life seems too to have had no passive side, but was only the 'fever called living'; but the melancholy of Gordon was more obtrusive and less subdued than that of Poe.

Gordon, least of all poets, succeeds in burying his identity. This characteristic melancholy is seldom absent, and, where it appears, it gives a tone to the whole poem. Often it deepens into a fierce despair, and an utter recklessness that seems to overcome his better nature:

> And where there's little left to hope,
> There's little left to dread.

And again :

> Why should he labour to help his neighbour,
> Who feels too reckless to help himself ?

And the often quoted lines :

> I should live the same life over, if I had to live again ;
> And the chances are I go where most men go.

Both Browning and Gordon have much in common even of character. The brave spirit that ' held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better, sleep to wake ', who wrote ' Pippa's Song ' and ' Prospice ', was not braver than he who wrote ' Gone ' and ' Thick-headed Thoughts'; but Browning believed in the good of life, and Gordon doubted. The very ' heart's heart ' of the faith of Browning is that ' all we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist ; not its semblance but itself ' ; and though

On earth the broken arcs ; in the heaven, a perfect round.

Now and then amid the din and heart-break of his life-struggle, the Australian poet comes face to face with Browning's optimism, and at times he almost believes it :

> Yet if all things change to the glory of One
> Who for all ill-doers gave His Own sweet Son,
> To His goodness so shall He change ill,
> When the world as a wither'd leaf shall be,
> And the sky like a shrivell'd scroll shall flee,
> And the souls shall be summon'd from land and sea,
> At the blast of His bright archangel.

as in 'The Rhyme of Joyous Garde'. But doubt presses hard on the heels of hope. No poet has ever portrayed more fearlessly the workings of fate and the force of evil than Browning has done, but he always believes that there is a path from the deepest depth to the highest height; and when he has looked life's worst and ugliest facts in the face as in the ghastly realism of the first scene of 'Pippa passes', he still comes back to the strong conviction of a goodness that must be triumphant in the end, for

> God's in his heaven—
> All's right with the world!

Gordon tries to follow him, but it is with faltering feet and uncertain purpose, and sometimes with blank misgivings. Kismet and Circumstances are his final philosophy of life.

> Things were to have been, and therefore
> They were, and they are to be,

is Gordon's reading of 'The Potter and the Clay'; Browning's is

> Look not thou down but up!
> To uses of a cup.

The last thing that Gordon has to say is,—

> We have had our share of strife,
> Tumblers in the mask of life,
> In the pantomime of noon
> Clown and pantaloon.

Let it not be quite our last quotation. Let us, however artistically inadmissible it may be to breathe, no matter how faintly, through the silver clarions of hope in an

essay on Gordon, end rather with the closing prayer of his own 'Road to Avernus':

> The unclean has follow'd the undefiled,
> And the ill *may* regain the good,
> And the man *may* be even as the little child!
> We are children lost in the wood—
> Lord! lead us out of this tangled wild,
> Where the wise and the prudent have been beguil'd,
> And only the babes have stood.

B. His Debt to Australia

Gordon himself, in some of the most beautiful lines he has written, in his 'Dedication' to *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes*, tells us that his poetic inspiration came from Australia. One can scarcely quote too often the exquisite verse in which our Southern spring-time is described by him in that poem:

> In the Spring, when the wattle gold trembles
> 'Twixt shadow and shine,
> When each dew-laden air draught resembles
> A long draught of wine;
> When the sky-line's blue burnish'd resistance
> Makes deeper the dreamiest distance,
> Some song in all hearts hath existence,—
> Such songs have been mine.

And out of our Australian glory of spaciousness and sunshine and our 'wonderful night of stars' were born these verses of his:

> They came in all guises, some vivid
> To clasp and to keep;
> Some sudden and swift as the livid
> Blue thunder-flame's leap.

This swept through the first breath of clover
With memories renew'd to the rover—
That flash'd while the black horse turn'd over
Before the long sleep.

Certainly Gordon came to Australia at a plastic and impressionable time in his life, and he spent here the formative years of his short career. The whole land was in 1853 one huge inspiration, for it was Australia in the heyday of its romance: its El Dorados thrilling men to the heart of them with unparalleled excitement: brimful of adventure, brimful of sport, and especially 'the sport of kings' in which the soul of Lindsay Gordon delighted; a veritable Land of the Golden Fleece, and invaded by a band of Argonauts.

Given an intensely nervous and imaginative man, sensitive almost to delicacy, and with some at least of that deep power of vision that makes the true seer: set him down in surroundings such as the Australia of the 'fifties presented, and he must become drunk with the wine of its limitless open spaces, of its glittering nights and sun-filled days. Gordon lands here with no thought of living by poetry: but the deep poetic heart which is 'more than all poetic fame' is in him, the sights and scents and sounds of his new home stir him: and quietly and shyly, with some of that 'shame at the exercise of the higher intelligence which besets those who are known to be renowned in field sports', as Marcus Clarke puts it, Gordon wrote, and the result is poetry—not sets of polished and finished verses, but deep emotions made articulate in speech, often crude and rough, but always impressive. His faculties are stirred to action by instinct; the verses come, as we say, almost of themselves, and for years are crooned over by the poet in secret, until one day the world knows and names a new star, not of the first, or even of the third, magnitude, but

for all that a star which has opened its soul to us, and therefore we love it.

Yet the curious part of it all is this: Gordon, even in his distinctively Australian poems, does not linger to describe Australian scenery, as Kendall does. The wattle and the sunshine are enshrined in his song, but for him, as for Browning, the physical world of nature is only the background of the picture and not the picture itself. The *human* element outweighs all else; without man nature is but the 'framework that waits for the picture to frame'. Too often for Gordon the 'man' that is needed to 'complete the incompletion' of the natural world is *himself*. So nearly half his poetry represents in some degree the working of his own mind: he becomes introspective, morbid, and melancholy. There is in him a singular combination of high animal spirits that seem to enjoy life to its utmost with a deep undercurrent of despair. His boisterous happiness is that of a man throwing off a deep load of care, and under all his galloping rhymes there is 'the ground-tone of human agony', the note of one who has looked deeper than the surface of things, and like the preacher of old has reached the mournful and essentially untrue conclusion that 'all is vanity'. And some of that melancholy and sadness is sourced in that loneliness and desolation of our real Australian bush, which, grey and colourless, rather than green and vivid, parts before the rider through its white, bare, uncouth gum-trees, 'and closes behind him like a fog'. Deep called unto deep, and the brooding sombre spirit of Gordon knew and met its fellow in the spirit of our bush.

Marcus Clarke knew—and some of his critics have not known, and they will not know, until they go out into its Never-Never lands, its unboundaried plains, its awful solitudes, its ghastly monotony—how true was the

answer that he himself gave to the question himself had put, 'What is the dominant note of Australian scenery?' We have known sleepless men, not easily moved by fear camped out at night on the slopes of its unpeopled mountains, waking their sleeping fellows to cry, 'For God's sake, speak to me!', so awful has the indescribable silence become, so that the desolation and mournfulness of it seem to have become concrete and living, and as if moving to smite and fell one with a blow. We cannot forbear to quote the great prose poem of Marcus Clarke on the characteristics of our Australian bush, taken from his Memorial volume, published in 1884.

'What is the dominant note of Australian scenery? That which is the dominant note of Edgar Allan Poe's poetry—Weird Melancholy. A poem like *L'Allegro* could never be written by an Australian. It is too airy, too sweet, too freshly happy. The Australian mountain forests are funereal, secret, stern. Their solitude is desolation. They seem to stifle in their black gorges a story of sullen despair. No tender sentiment is nourished in their shade. In other lands the dying year is mourned, the falling leaves drop lightly on his bier. In the Australian forests no leaves fall. The savage winds shout among the rock clefts. From the melancholy gums strips of white bark hang and rustle. The very animal life of these frowning hills is either grotesque or ghostly. Great grey kangaroos hop noiselessly over the coarse grass. Flights of white cockatoos stream out shrieking like evil souls. The sun suddenly sinks, and the mopokes burst out into horrible peals of semi-human laughter. The natives aver that, when night comes, from out the bottomless depth of some lagoon the Bunyip rises, and, in form like a monstrous sea-calf, drags his loathsome length from out the ooze. From a corner of the silent forest rises a dismal chant, and around a fire dance natives painted like skeletons. All is fear-inspiring and gloomy. No bright fancies are linked with the memories of the mountains. Hopeless explorers have named them out of their sufferings—Mount Misery,

Mount Dreadful, Mount Despair. As when among sylvan scenes in places

> Made green with the running of rivers,
> And gracious with temperate air,

the soul is soothed and satisfied, so, placed before the frightful grandeur of these barren hills, it drinks in their sentiment of defiant ferocity, and is steeped in bitterness.

'Australia has rightly been named the Land of the Dawning. Wrapped in the mist of early morning, her history looms vague and gigantic. The lonely horseman riding between the moonlight and the day, sees vast shadows creeping across the shelterless and silent plains, hears strange noises in the primeval forests, where flourishes a vegetation long dead in other lands, and feels, despite his fortune, that the trim utilitarian civilization which bred him shrinks into insignificance beside the contemptuous grandeur of forest and ranges coeval with an age in which European scientists have cradled his own race.

'There is a poem in every form of tree or flower, but the poetry which lives in the trees and flowers of Australia differs from those of other countries. Europe is the home of knightly song, of bright deeds and clear morning thought. Asia sinks beneath the weighty recollection of her past magnificence, as the Suttee sinks jewel-burdened, upon the corpse of dread grandeur, destructive even in its death. America swiftly hurries on her way, rapid, glittering, insatiable even as one of her own giant waterfalls. From the jungles of Africa, and the creeper-tangled groves of the Islands of the South, arise, from the glowing hearts of a thousand flowers, heavy and intoxicating odours—the Upas-poison which dwells in barbaric sensuality. In Australia alone is to be found the Grotesque, the Weird, the strange scribblings of Nature learning how to write. Some see no beauty in our trees without shade, our flowers without perfume, our birds who cannot fly, and our beasts who have not yet learned to walk on all fours. But the dweller in the wilderness acknowledges the subtle charm of this fantastic land of monstrosities. He becomes familiar with the beauty of loneliness. Whispered to by the myriad tongues of the

wilderness, he learns the language of the barren and the uncouth, and can read the hieroglyphs of haggard gum-trees, blown into odd shapes, distorted with fierce hot winds, or cramped with cold nights, when the Southern Cross freezes in a cloudless sky of icy blue. The phantasmagoria of that wild dreamland termed the Bush interprets itself, and the Poet of our desolation begins to comprehend why free Esau loved his heritage of desert sand, better than all the bountiful richness of Egypt.'

This is not the only truth about our bushlands and our rainless interiors, but it is truth—and it is still true, and will remain true, until our scenery has become humanized and made accessible and near and familiar, as the lakes and valleys and hills and meadows of the Old World have been made by the love and music and vision of generations of poets. Gordon knew and understood the truth, and one of his debts to Australia, a debt for which she charged him usury, was this weird environment that chimed too truly with the mournful tolling of the bells in his own soul. Here is his own acknowledgement of the debt under which he recognized his own poetry lay to the land of his adoption :

THEY are rhymes rudely strung with intent less
Of sound than of words,
In lands where bright blossoms are scentless,
And songless bright birds ;
Where, with fire and fierce drought on her tresses,
Insatiable Summer oppresses
Sere woodlands and sad wildernesses,
And faint flocks and herds.

Where in dreariest days, when all dews end,
And all winds are warm,
Wild Winter's large flood-gates are loosen'd,
And floods, freed by storm,

From broken up fountain heads, dash on
Dry deserts with long pent up passion—
Here rhyme was first framed without fashion,
Song shaped without form.

Whence gather'd ?—The locust's glad chirrup
May furnish a stave ;
The ring of a rowel and stirrup,
The wash of a wave.
The chaunt of the marsh frog in rushes,
That chimes through the pauses and hushes
Of nightfall, the torrent that gushes,
The tempests that rave.

She gave him other things, and he requited her nobly for her gifts—freedom, largeness of outlook, horses dearer to him than most men were, the joys of the turf and the wine of her gold and blue—but her largest and most influential gift was herself, and buried in it, making at once its grandeur and its pain, was a sword that in the end pierced her poet's heart, ' who learnt in suffering what he taught in song.'

IV. AUSTRALIA'S DEBT TO GORDON

And what shall we say of our debt to him ? This at least—it can never be repaid. Centuries hence, when men go up beside the banks of the noble stream of great poetry, which we believe will one day gladden the city and humanize and fertilize and deepen our Australian national life, as they climb reverently to its source, they will find on a broken memorial column, in letters that cannot fade, the name of Adam Lindsay Gordon.

FRANK MALDON ROBB.

SEA SPRAY AND SMOKE DRIFT

PODAS OKUS[1]

Am I waking? Was I sleeping?
Dearest, are you watching yet?
Traces on your cheeks of weeping
Glitter, 'tis in vain you fret;
Drifting ever! drifting onward!
In the glass the bright sand runs
Steadily and slowly downward;
Hushed are all the Myrmidons.

Has Automedon been banish'd
From his post beside my bed?
Where has Agamemnon vanished?
Where is warlike Diomed?
Where is Nestor? where Ulysses?
Menelaus, where is he?
Call them not, more dear your kisses
Than their prosings are to me.

Daylight fades and night must follow,
Low, where sea and sky combine,
Droops the orb of great Apollo,
Hostile god to me and mine.
Through the tent's wide entrance streaming,
In a flood of glory rare,
Glides the golden sunset, gleaming
On your golden, gleaming hair.

Note 1, p. 373.

Chide him not, the leech who tarries,
Surest aid were all too late;
Surer far the shaft of Paris,
Winged by Phoebus and by fate;
When he crouch'd behind the gable.
Had I once his features scann'd,
Phoebus' self had scarce been able
To have nerved his trembling hand.

Blue-eyed maiden! dear Athena!
Goddess chaste, and wise, and brave,
From the snares of Polyxena
Thou wouldst fain thy favourite save.
Tell me, is it not far better
That it should be as it is?
Jove's behests we cannot fetter,
Fate's decrees are always his.

Many seek for peace and riches,
Length of days and life of ease;
I have sought for one thing, which is
Fairer unto me than these.
Often, too, I've heard the story,
In my boyhood, of the doom
Which the fates assigned me—Glory,
Coupled with an early tomb.

Swift assault and sudden sally
Underneath the Trojan wall;
Charge, and countercharge, and rally,
War-cry loud, and trumpet call;

Doubtful strain of desp'rate battle,
Cut and thrust and grapple fierce
Swords that ring on shields that rattle,
Blades that gash and darts that pierce ;—

I have done with these for ever ;
By the loud resounding sea,
Where the reedy jav'lins quiver,
There is now no place for me.
Day by day our ranks diminish,
We are falling day by day ;
But our sons the strife will finish,
Where man tarries man must slay.

Life, 'tis said, to all men sweet is,
Death to all must bitter be ;
Wherefore thus, oh, mother Thetis ?
None can baffle Jove's decree ?
I am ready, I am willing,
To resign my stormy life ;
Weary of this long blood-spilling,
Sated with this ceaseless strife.

Shorter doom I've pictured dimly,
On a bed of crimson sand ;
Fighting hard and dying grimly,
Silent lips, and striking hand ;
But the toughest lives are brittle,
And the bravest and the best
Lightly fall—it matters little ;
Now I only long for rest.

I have seen enough of slaughter,
  Seen Scamander's torrent red,
Seen hot blood poured out like water,
  Seen the champaign heaped with dead.
Men will call me unrelenting,
  Pitiless, vindictive, stern ;
Few will raise a voice dissenting,
  Few will better things discern.

Speak ! the fires of life are reeling,
  Like the wildfires on the marsh,
Was I to a friend unfeeling ?
  Was I to a mistress harsh ?
Was there naught save bloodshed throbbing
  In this heart and on this brow ?
Whisper ! girl, in silence sobbing !
  Dead Patroclus ! answer thou !

Dry those violet orbs that glisten,
  Darling, I have had my day ;
Place your hand in mine and listen,
  Ere the strong soul cleaves its way
Through the death mist hovering o'er me,
  As the stout ship cleaves the wave,
To my fathers gone before me,
  To the gods who love the brave !

Courage, we must part for certain ;
  Shades that sink and shades that rise,
Blending in a shroud-like curtain,
  Gather o'er these weary eyes.

O'er the fields we used to roam, in
Brighter days and lighter cheer,
Gathers thus the quiet gloaming—
Now, I ween, the end is near.

For the hand that clasps your fingers,
Closing in the death-grip tight,
Scarcely feels the warmth that lingers,
Scarcely heeds the pressure light;
While the failing pulse that alters,
Changing 'neath a death chill damp,
Flickers, flutters, flags, and falters,
Feebly, like a waning lamp.

Think'st thou, love, 'twill chafe my ghost in
Hades' realm, where heroes shine,
Should I hear the shepherd boasting
To his Argive concubine?
Let him boast, the girlish victor
Let him brag; not thus, I trow,
Were the laurels torn from Hector,
Not so very long ago.

Does my voice sound thick and husky?
Is my hand no longer warm?
Round that neck where pearls look dusky
Let me once more wind my arm;
Rest my head upon that shoulder,
Where it rested oft of yore;
Warm and white, yet seeming colder
Now than e'er it seem'd before.

'Twas the fraud of Priam's daughter,
Not the force of Priam's son,
Slew me—ask not why I sought her,
'Twas my doom—her work is done!
Fairer far than she, and dearer,
By a thousand-fold thou art;
Come, my own one, nestle nearer,
Cheating death of half his smart.

Slowly, while your amber tresses
Shower down their golden rain,
Let me drink those last caresses,
Never to be felt again;
Yet th' Elysian halls are spacious,
Somewhere near me I may keep
Room—who knows?—The gods are gracious;
Lay me lower—let me sleep!

Lower yet, my senses wander,
And my spirit seems to roll
With the tide of swift Scamander
Rushing to a viewless goal.
In my ears, like distant washing
Of the surf upon the shore,
Drones a murmur, faintly splashing,
'Tis the splash of Charon's oar.

Lower yet, my own Briseis,
Denser shadows veil the light;
Hush, what is to be, to be is,
Close my eyes and say good-night.

Lightly lay your red lips, kissing,
On this cold mouth, while your thumbs
Lie on these cold eyelids pressing—
Pallas! thus thy soldier comes

GONE[1]

In Collins Street standeth a statue tall—
A statue tall on a pillar of stone,
Telling its story, to great and small,
Of the dust reclaimed from the sand waste lone.
Weary and wasted, and worn and wan,
Feeble and faint, and languid and low,
He lay on the desert a dying man,
Who has gone, my friends, where we all must go.

There are perils by land, and perils by water,
Short, I ween, are the obsequies
Of the landsman lost, but they may be shorter
With the mariner lost in the trackless seas;
And well for him, when the timbers start,
And the stout ship reels and settles below,
Who goes to his doom with as bold a heart
As that dead man gone where we all must go.

Man is stubborn his rights to yield,
And redder than dews at eventide
Are the dews of battle, shed on the field
By a nation's wrath or a despot's pride;

[1] Note 2, p. 374.

But few who have heard their death-knell roll,
From the cannon's lips where they faced the foe,
Have fallen as stout and steady of soul,
As that dead man gone where we all must go.

Traverse yon spacious burial-ground,
Many are sleeping soundly there,
Who pass'd with mourners standing around,
Kindred, and friends, and children fair;
Did he envy such ending? 'twere hard to say;
Had he cause to envy such ending? no;
Can the spirit feel for the senseless clay
When it once has gone where we all must go?

What matters the sand or the whitening chalk,
The blighted herbage, the black'ning log,
The crooked beak of the eagle-hawk,
Or the hot red tongue of the native dog?
That couch was rugged, those sextons rude,
Yet, in spite of a leaden shroud, we know
That the bravest and fairest are earth-worms' food,
When once they've gone where we all must go.

With the pistol clenched in his failing hand,
With the death mist spread o'er his fading eyes,
He saw the sun go down on the sand,
And he slept, and never saw it rise;
'Twas well; he toil'd till his task was done,
Constant and calm in his latest throe,
The storm was weathered, the battle was won,
When he went, my friends, where we all must go.

God grant that whenever, soon or late,
Our course is run and our goal is reach'd,
We may meet our fate as steady and straight
As he whose bones in yon desert bleach'd;
No tears are needed—our cheeks are dry,
We have none to waste upon living woe;
Shall we sigh for one who has ceased to sigh,
Having gone, my friends, where we all must go?

We tarry yet, we are toiling still,
He is gone and he fares the best,
He fought against odds, he struggled up hill,
He has fairly earned his season of rest;
No tears are needed—fill out the wine,
Let the goblets clash, and the grape juice flow;
Ho! pledge me a death-drink, comrade mine,
To a brave man gone where we all must go.

UNSHRIVEN

Oh! the sun rose on the lea, and the bird sang merrilie,
And the steed stood ready harness'd in the hall,
And he left his lady's bower, and he sought the eastern tower,
And he lifted cloak and weapon from the wall.

'We were wed but yester-noon, must we separate so soon,
Must you travel unassoiled and, aye, unshriven,
With the blood stain on your hand, and the red streak on your brand,
And your guilt all unconfess'd and unforgiven?'

'Tho' it were but yester-even we were wedded, still unshriven,
Across the moor this morning I must ride;
I must gallop fast and straight, for my errand will not wait;
Fear naught, I shall return at eventide.'

'If I fear, it is for thee, thy weal is dear to me,
Yon moor with retribution seemeth rife;
As we've sown so must we reap, and I've started in my sleep
At the voice of the avenger, "Life for life."'

'My arm is strong, I ween, and my trusty blade is keen,
And the courser that I ride is swift and sure,
And I cannot break my oath, though to leave thee I am loath,
There is one that I must meet upon the moor.'

. . . . .

Oh! the sun shone on the lea, and the bird sang merrilie,
Down the avenue and through the iron gate,
Spurr'd and belted, so he rode, steel to draw and steel to goad,
And across the moor he gallop'd fast and straight.

. . . . .
. . . . .

Oh! the sun shone on the lea, and the bird sang full of glee,
Ere the mists of evening gather'd chill and grey;
But the wild bird's merry note on the deaf ear never smote,
And the sunshine never warmed the lifeless clay.

Ere the sun began to droop, or the mist began to stoop,
The youthful bride lay swooning in the hall;
Empty saddle on his back, broken bridle hanging slack,
The steed returned full gallop to the stall.

Oh! the sun sank in the sea, and the wind wailed drearilie;
Let the bells in yonder monastery toll,
For the night rack nestles dark round the body stiff and stark,
And unshriven to its Maker flies the soul.

YE WEARIE WAYFARER

Ye Ballad

IN EIGHT FYTTES[1]

FYTTE I

BY WOOD AND WOLD

[A PREAMBLE]

'Beneath the greenwood bough.'—*W. Scott.*

LIGHTLY the breath of the spring wind blows,
Though laden with faint perfume,
'Tis the fragrance rare that the bushman knows,
The scent of the wattle bloom.
Two-thirds of our journey at least are done,
Old horse! let us take a spell
In the shade from the glare of the noon-day sun,
Thus far we have travell'd well;

[1] Note 3, p. 374.

Your bridle I'll slip, your saddle ungirth,
And lay them beside this log,
For you'll roll in that track of reddish earth,
And shake like a water-dog.

Upon yonder rise there 's a clump of trees—
Their shadows look cool and broad—
You can crop the grass as fast as you please,
While I stretch my limbs on the sward ;
'Tis pleasant, I ween, with a leafy screen
O'er the weary head, to lie
On the mossy carpet of emerald green,
'Neath the vault of the azure sky ;
Thus all alone by the wood and wold,
I yield myself once again
To the memories old that, like tales fresh told,
Come flitting across the brain.

Fytte II

BY FLOOD AND FIELD

[A LEGEND OF THE COTSWOLD]

'They have saddled a hundred milk-white steeds,
They have bridled a hundred black.'—*Old Ballad.*
'He turned in his saddle, now follow who dare,
I ride for my country, quoth . . .'—*Lawrence.*

I REMEMBER the lowering wintry morn,
And the mist on the Cotswold hills,
Where I once heard the blast of the huntsman's horn,
Not far from the seven rills.

Jack Esdale was there, and Hugh St. Clair,
Bob Chapman and Andrew Kerr,
And big George Griffiths [1] on Devil-May-Care,
And—black Tom Oliver.[1]
And one who rode on a dark-brown steed,
Clean jointed, sinewy, spare,
With the lean game head of the Blacklock breed,
And the resolute eye that loves the lead,
And the quarters massive and square—
A tower of strength, with a promise of speed
(There was Celtic blood in the pair).

I remember how merry a start we got,
When the red fox broke from the gorse,
In a country so deep, with a scent so hot,
That the hound could outpace the horse;
I remember how few in the front rank show'd,
How endless appeared the tail,
On the brown hill side, where we cross'd the road,
And headed towards the vale.
The dark-brown steed on the left was there,
On the right was a dappled grey,
And between the pair, on a chestnut mare,
The duffer who writes this lay.
What business had 'this child' there to ride?
But little or none at all;
Yet I held my own for a while in 'the pride
That goeth before a fall'.
Though rashness can hope for but one result,
We are heedless when fate draws nigh us,
And the maxim holds good, '*Quem perdere vult Deus, dementat prius.*'

[1] Note 4, A and B, p. 374.

The right hand man to the left hand said,
As down in the vale we went,
'Harden your heart like a millstone, Ned,
And set your face as flint;
Solid and tall is the rasping wall
That stretches before us yonder;
You must have it at speed or not at all,
'Twere better to halt than to ponder,
For the stream runs wide on the take-off side,
And washes the clay bank under;
Here goes for a pull, 'tis a madman's ride,
And a broken neck if you blunder.'

No word in reply his comrade spoke,
Nor waver'd, nor once look'd round,
But I saw him shorten his horse's stroke
As we splash'd through the marshy ground;
I remember the laugh that all the while
On his quiet features play'd:—
So he rode to his death, with that careless smile,
In the van of the 'Light Brigade';
So stricken by Russian grape, the cheer
Rang out, while he toppled back,
From the shattered lungs as merry and clear
As it did when it roused the pack.
Let never a tear his memory stain,
Give his ashes never a sigh,
One of many who perished, NOT IN VAIN,
AS A TYPE OF OUR CHIVALRY—

I remember one thrust he gave to his hat,
And two to the flanks of the brown,
And still as a statue of old he sat,
And he shot to the front, hands down;

I remember the snort and the stag-like bound
Of the steed six lengths to the fore,
And the laugh of the rider while, landing sound,
He turned in his saddle and glanced around;
I remember—but little more,
Save a bird's-eye gleam of the dashing stream
A jarring thud on the wall,
A shock and the blank of a nightmare's dream—
I was down with a stunning fall.

Fytte III

ZU DER EDLEN YAGD

[A TREATISE ON TREES—VINE-TREE *v.* SADDLE-TREE]

> Now, welcome, welcome, masters mine,
> Thrice welcome to the noble chase,
> Nor earthly sport, nor sport divine,
> Can take such honourable place.'
> *Ballad of the Wild Huntsman.*
> (*Free Translation.*)

I REMEMBER some words my father said,
When I was an urchin vain;—
God rest his soul, in his narrow bed
These ten long years he hath lain.
When I think one drop of the blood he bore
This faint heart surely must hold,
It may be my fancy and nothing more,
But the faint heart seemeth bold.

He said that as from the blood of grape,
Or from juice distilled from the grain,
False vigour, soon to evaporate,
Is lent to nerve and brain,

So the coward will dare on the gallant horse
What he never would dare alone,
Because he exults in a borrowed force,
And a hardihood not his own.

And it may be so, yet this difference lies
'Twixt the vine and the saddle-tree,
The spurious courage that drink supplies
Sets our baser passions free ;
But the stimulant which the horseman feels,
When he gallops fast and straight,
To his better nature most appeals
And charity conquers hate.

As the kindly sunshine thaws the snow,
E'en malice and spite will yield,
We could almost welcome our mortal foe
In the saddle by flood and field ;
And chivalry dawns in the merry tale
That ' Market Harborough ' writes,
And the yarns of ' Nimrod ' and ' Martingale '
Seem legends of loyal knights.

Now, tell me for once, old horse of mine
Grazing round me loose and free,
Does your ancient equine heart repine
For a burst in such companie,
Where ' the *Powers* that be ' in the front rank ride,
To hold your own with the throng,
Or to plunge at ' Faugh-a-Ballagh's ' side
In the rapids of Dandenong ?

Don't tread on my toes, you're no foolish weight,
So I found to my cost, as under
Your carcass I lay, when you rose too late,
Yet I blame you not for the blunder.
What! sulky, old man, your under lip falls!
You think I too ready to rail am
At your kinship remote to that duffer at walls,
The talkative roadster of Balaam.

Fytte IV

IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS

[A logical discussion]

'Then hey for boot and horse, lad!
And round the world away!
Young blood will have its course, lad!
And every dog his day!'—*C. Kingsley.*

There 's a formula which the west country clown
Once used, ere their blows fell thick,
At the fairs on the Devon and Cornwall downs,
In their bouts with the single-stick.
You may read a moral, not far amiss,
If you care to moralize,
In the crossing guard, where the ash-plants kiss,
To the words 'God spare our eyes'.

No game was ever yet worth a rap
For a rational man to play,
Into which no accident, no mishap,
Could possibly find its way.
If you hold the willow, a shooter from Wills
May transform you into a hopper,
And the football meadow is rife with spills,
If you feel disposed for a cropper;

In a rattling gallop with hound and horse
You may chance to reverse the medal
On the sward, with the saddle your loins across,
And your hunter's loins on the saddle;
In the stubbles you'll find it hard to frame
A remonstrance firm, yet civil,
When oft as 'our mutual friend' takes aim,
Long odds may be laid on the rising game,
And against your gaiters level;
There 's danger even where fish are caught
To those who a wetting fear;
For what 's worth having must ay be bought,
And sport 's like life, and life 's like sport,
'It ain't all skittles and beer'.

The honey bag lies close to the sting,
The rose is fenced by the thorn,
Shall we leave to others their gathering,
And turn from clustering fruits that cling
To the garden wall in scorn?
Albeit those purple grapes hang high,
Like the fox in the ancient tale,
Let us pause and try, ere we pass them by,
Though we, like the fox, may fail.

All hurry is worse than useless; think
On the adage, 'Tis pace that kills;'
Shun bad tobacco, avoid strong drink,
Abstain from Holloway's pills,
Wear woollen socks, they're the best you'll find,
Beware how you leave off flannel;
And whatever you do, don't change your mind
When once you have picked your panel;

With a bank of cloud in the south south-east,
Stand ready to shorten sail ;
Fight shy of a corporation feast ;
Don't trust to a martingale ;
Keep your powder dry, and shut one eye,
Not both, when you touch your trigger ;
Don't stop with your head too frequently
(This advice ain't meant for a nigger);
Look before you leap, if you like, but if
You mean leaping, don't look long,
Or the weakest place will soon grow stiff,
And the strongest doubly strong ;
As far as you can, to every man,
Let your aid be freely given,
And hit out straight, 'tis your shortest plan,
When against the ropes you're driven.

Mere pluck, though not in the least sublime,
Is wiser than blank dismay,
Since ' No sparrow can fall before its time ',
And we're valued higher than they ;
So hope for the best and leave the rest
In charge of a stronger hand,
Like the honest boors in the far-off west,
With the formula terse and grand.

They were men for the most part rough and rude,
Dull and illiterate,
But they nursed no quarrel, they cherished no feud,
They were strangers to spite and hate ;
In a kindly spirit they took their stand,

That brothers and sons might learn
How a man should uphold the sports of his land,
And strike his best with a strong right hand,
And take his strokes in return.
'Twas a barbarous practice,' the Quaker cries,
'Tis a thing of the past, thank heaven'—
Keep your thanks till the combative instinct dies
With the taint of the olden leaven;
Yes, the times are changed, for better or worse,
The prayer that no harm befall
Has given its place to a drunken curse,
And the manly game to a brawl.

Our burdens are heavy, our natures weak,
Some pastime devoid of harm
May we look for? 'Puritan elder, speak!'[1]
'Yea, friend, peradventure thou mayest seek
Recreation singing a psalm.'
If I did, your visage so grim and stern
Would relax in a ghastly smile,
For of music I never one note could learn,
And my feeble minstrelsy would turn
Your chant to discord vile.

Tho' the Philistine's mail could naught avail,
Nor the spear like a weaver's beam,
There are episodes yet in the Psalmist's tale,
To obliterate which his poems fail,
Which his exploits fail to redeem.
Can the Hittite's wrongs forgotten be?
Does HE warble '*Non nobis Domine*,'

[1] Note 5, p. 375.

With his monarch in blissful concert, free
From all malice to flesh inherent;
Zeruiah's offspring, who served so well,
Yet between the horns of the altar fell—
Does HIS voice the '*Quid gloriaris*' swell,
Or the '*Quare fremuerunt*'?
It may well be thus where DAVID sings,
And Uriah joins in the chorus,
But while earth to earthy matter clings,
Neither you nor the bravest of Judah's kings
As a pattern can stand before us.

FYTTE V

LEX TALIONIS

[A MORAL DISCOURSE]

'And if there 's blood upon his hand,
'Tis but the blood of deer.'—*W. Scott.*

To beasts of the field, and fowls of the air,
And fish of the sea alike,
Man's hand is ever slow to spare,
And ever ready to strike;
With a licence to kill, and to work our will,
In season by land or by water,
To our heart's content we may take our fill
Of the joys we derive from slaughter.

And few, I reckon, our rights gainsay
In this world of rapine and wrong,
Where the weak and the timid seem lawful prey
For the resolute and the strong;

Fins, furs, and feathers, they are and were
For our use and pleasure created,
We can shoot, and hunt, and angle, and snare,
Unquestioned, if not unsated.

I have neither the will nor the right to blame,
Yet to many (though not to all)
The sweets of destruction are somewhat tame,
When no personal risks befall ;
Our victims suffer but little, we trust
(Mere guesswork and blank enigma),
If they suffer at all, our field sports must
Of cruelty bear the stigma.

Shall we, hard-hearted to their fates, thus
Soft-hearted shrink from our own,
When the measure we mete is meted to us,
When we reap as we've always sown ?
Shall we who for pastime have squander'd life,
Who are styled 'the Lords of Creation',
Recoil from our chance of more equal strife,
And our risk of retaliation ?

Though short is the dying pheasant's pain,
Scant pity you well may spare,
And the partridge slain is a triumph vain,
And a risk that a child may dare ;
You feel, when you lower the smoking gun,
Some ruth for yon slaughtered hare,
And hit or miss, in your selfish fun
The widgeon has little share.

But you've no remorseful qualms or pangs
When you kneel by the grizzly's lair,
On that conical bullet your sole chance hangs,
'Tis the weak one's advantage fair,
And the shaggy giant's terrific fangs
Are ready to crush and tear;
Should you miss, one vision of home and friends,
Five words of unfinish'd prayer,
Three savage knife stabs, so your sport ends
In the worrying grapple that chokes and rends ;—
Rare sport, at least, for the bear.

Short shrift ! sharp fate ! dark doom to dree !
Hard struggle, though quickly ending !
At home or abroad, by land or sea,
In peace or war, sore trials must be,
And worse may happen to you or to me,
For none are secure, and none can flee
From a destiny impending.

Ah ! friend, did you think when the *London* sank.
Timber by timber, plank by plank,
In a cauldron of boiling surf,
How alone at least, with never a flinch,
In a rally contested inch by inch,
You could fall on the trampled turf ?
When a livid wall of the sea leaps high,
In the lurid light of a leaden sky,
And bursts on the quarter railing ;
While the howling storm-gust seems to vie
With the crash of splintered beams that fly,
Yet fails too oft to smother the cry
Of women and children wailing ?

Then those who listen in sinking ships
To despairing sobs from their lov'd one's lips,
  Where the green wave thus slowly shatters,
May long for the crescent-claw that rips
The bison into ribbons and strips,
  And tears the strong elk to tatters.

Oh! sunderings short of body and breath!
Oh! 'battle and murder and sudden death!'
  Against which the Liturgy preaches;
By the will of a just, yet a merciful Power,
Less bitter, perchance, in the mystic hour,
When the wings of the shadowy angel lower,
  Than man in his blindness teaches!

Fytte VI

POTTERS' CLAY

[AN ALLEGORICAL INTERLUDE]

'Nec propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.'

Though the pitcher that goes to the sparkling rill
  Too oft gets broken at last,
There are scores of others its place to fill
  When its earth to the earth is cast;
Keep that pitcher at home, let it never roam,
  But lie like a useless clod,
Yet sooner or later the hour will come
  When its chips are thrown to the sod.

Is it wise, then, say, in the waning day,
  When the vessel is crack'd and old,
To cherish the battered potter's clay,
  As though it were virgin gold?

Take care of yourself, dull, boorish elf,
Though prudent and safe you seem,
Your pitcher will break on the musty shelf,
And mine by the dazzling stream.

Fytte VII

CITO PEDE PRETERIT AETAS

[A PHILOSOPHICAL DISSERTATION]

'Gillian 's dead, God rest her bier—
How I loved her many years syne;
Marion's married, but I sit here,
Alive and merry at three-score year,
Dipping my nose in Gascoigne wine.'
Wamba's Song—Thackeray.

A MELLOWER light doth Sol afford,
His meridian glare has pass'd,
And the trees on the broad and sloping sward
Their length'ning shadows cast.
'Time flies.' The current will be no joke,
If swollen by recent rain,
To cross in the dark, so I'll have a smoke,
And then I'll be off again.

What 's up, old horse? Your ears you prick,
And your eager eyeballs glisten;
'Tis the wild dog's note in the tea-tree thick,
By the river, to which you listen.
With head erect, and tail flung out,
For a gallop you seem to beg,
But I feel the qualm of a chilling doubt
As I glance at your fav'rite leg.

Let the dingo rest, 'tis all for the best,
In this world there 's room enough
For him and you and me and the rest.
And the country is awful rough.
We've had our gallop in days of yore,
Now down the hill we must run ;
Yet at times we long for one gallop more,
Although it were only one.

Did our spirits quail at a new four-rail,
Could a ' double ' double-bank us,
Ere nerve and sinew began to fail
In the consulship of Plancus ?
When our blood ran rapidly, and when
Our bones were pliant and limber,
Could we stand a merry cross-counter then,
A slogging fall over timber ?

Arcades ambo ! Duffers both
In our best of days, alas !
(I tell the truth, though to tell it loth)
'Tis time we were gone to grass ;
The young leaves shoot, the sere leaves fall,
And the old gives way to the new,
While the preacher cries, ' 'Tis vanity all,
And vexation of spirit, too.'

Now over my head the vapours curl
From the bowl of the soothing clay,
In the misty forms that eddy and whirl
My thoughts are flitting away ;

Yes, the preacher's right, 'tis vanity all,
But the sweeping rebuke he showers
On vanities all may heaviest fall
On vanities worse than ours.

We have no wish to exaggerate
The worth of the sports we prize,
Some toil for their Church, and some for their State,
And some for their merchandise;
Some traffic and trade in the city's mart,
Some travel by land and sea,
Some follow science, some cleave to art,
And some to scandal and tea;

And some for their country and their queen
Would fight, if the chance they had,
Good sooth, 'twere a sorry world, I ween,
If we all went galloping mad;
Yet if once we efface the joys of the chase
From the land, and outroot the Stud,
GOOD-BYE TO THE ANGLO-SAXON RACE!
FAREWELL TO THE NORMAN BLOOD!

Where the burn runs down to the uplands brown,
From the heights of the snow-clad range,
What anodyne drawn from the stifling town
Can be reckon'd a fair exchange
For the stalker's stride, on the mountain side
In the bracing northern weather,
To the slopes where couch, in their antler'd pride,
The deer on the perfum'd heather.

Oh ! the vigour with which the air is rife !
The spirit of joyous motion ;
The fever, the fullness of animal life,
Can be drain'd from no earthly potion !
The lungs with the living gas grow light,
And the limbs feel the strength of ten,
While the chest expands with its madd'ning might,
God's glorious oxygen.

Thus the measur'd stroke, on elastic sward,
Of the steed three parts extended,
Hard held, the breath of his nostrils broad,
With the golden ether blended ;
Then the leap, the rise from the springy turf,
The rush through the buoyant air,
And the light shock landing—the veriest serf
Is an emperor then and there.

Such scenes ! sensation and sound and sight,
To some undiscover'd shore
On the current of Time's remorseless flight
Have they swept to return no more ?
While, like phantoms bright of the fever'd night,
That have vex'd our slumbers of yore,
You follow us still in your ghostly might,
Dead days that have gone before.

Vain dreams, again and again re-told,
Must you crowd on the weary brain,
Till the fingers are cold that entwin'd of old
Round foil and trigger and rein,

Till stay'd for ay are the roving feet,
  Till the restless hands are quiet,
Till the stubborn heart has forgotten to beat,
  Till the hot blood has ceas'd to riot ?

In Exeter Hall the saint may chide,
  The sinner may scoff outright,
The Bacchanal steep'd in the flagon's tide,
  Or the sensual Sybarite ;
But NOLAN'S name will flourish in fame,
  When our galloping days are past,
When we go to the place from whence we came,
  Perchance to find rest at last.

Thy riddles grow dark, oh ! drifting cloud,
  And thy misty shapes grow drear,
Thou hang'st in the air like a shadowy shroud,
  But I am of lighter cheer ;
Though our future lot is a sable blot,
  Though the wise ones of earth will blame us,
Though our saddles will rot, and our rides be forgot,
  'DUM VIVIMUS, VIVAMUS !'

FYTTE VIII

FINIS EXOPTATUS

[A METAPHYSICAL SONG]

'There 's something in this world amiss
Shall be unriddled by and by.'—*Tennyson.*

BOOT and saddle, see, the slanting
  Rays begin to fall,
Flinging lights and colours flaunting
  Through the shadows tall.

Onward! onward! must we travel?
When will come the goal?
Riddle I may not unravel,
Cease to vex my soul.

Harshly break those peals of laughter
From the jays aloft,
Can we guess what they cry after?
We have heard them oft;
Perhaps some strain of rude thanksgiving
Mingles in their song,
Are they glad that they are living?
Are they right or wrong?
Right, 'tis joy that makes them call so,
Why should they be sad?
Certes! we are living also,
Shall not we be glad?
Onward! onward! must we travel?
Is the goal more near?
Riddle we may not unravel,
Why so dark and drear?

Yon small bird his hymn outpouring,
On the branch close by,
Recks not for the kestrel soaring
In the nether sky,
Though the hawk with wings extended
Poises over head,
Motionless as though suspended
By a viewless thread.

See, he stoops, nay, shooting forward
With the arrow's flight,
Swift and straight away to nor'ward
Sails he out of sight.
Onward! onward! thus we travel,
Comes the goal more nigh?
Riddle we may not unravel,
Who shall make reply?

Ha! Friend Ephraim, saint or sinner,
Tell me if you can—
Tho' we may not judge the inner
By the outer man,
Yet by girth of broadcloth ample,
And by cheeks that shine,
Surely you set no example
In the fasting line—

Could you, like yon bird, discov'ring
Fate as close at hand,
As the kestrel o'er him hov'ring,
Still, as he did, stand?
Trusting grandly, singing gaily,
Confident and calm,
Not one false note in your daily
Hymn or weekly psalm?

Oft your oily tones are heard in
Chapel, where you preach,
This the everlasting burden
Of the tale you teach:

We are d——d, our sins are deadly,
You alone are heal'd '—
'Twas not thus their gospel redly
Saints and martyrs seal'd.
You had seem'd more like a martyr,
Than you seem to us,
To the beasts that caught a Tartar,
Once at Ephesus!
Rather than the stout apostle
Of the Gentiles, who,
Pagan-like, could cuff and wrestle,
They'd have chosen you.

Yet, I ween, on such occasion,
Your dissenting voice
Would have been, in mild persuasion,
Raised against their choice;
Man of peace, and man of merit,
Pompous, wise, and grave,
Ephraim! is it flesh or spirit
You strive most to save?
Vain is half this care and caution
O'er the earthly shell,
We can neither baffle nor shun
Dark-plumed Azrael.
Onward! onward! still we wander,
Nearer draws the goal;
Half the riddle's read, we ponder
Vainly on the whole.

Eastward! in the pink horizon,
Fleecy hillocks shame
This dim range dull earth that lies on,
Tinged with rosy flame.

Westward! as a stricken giant
Stoops his bloody crest,
And tho' vanquish'd, frowns defiant,
Sinks the sun to rest.
Distant, yet approaching quickly,
From the shades that lurk,
Like a black pall gathers thickly,
Night, when none may work.
Soon our restless occupation
Shall have ceas'd to be;
Units! in God's vast creation,
Ciphers! what are we?
Onward! onward! oh! faint-hearted;
Nearer and more near
Has the goal drawn since we started,
Be of better cheer.

Preacher! all forbearance ask, for
All are worthless found,
Man must ay take man to task for
Faults while earth goes round.
On this dank soil thistles muster,
Thorns are broadcast sown;
Seek not figs where thistles cluster,
Grapes where thorns have grown.

Sun and rain and dew from heaven,
Light and shade and air,
Heat and moisture freely given,
Thorns and thistles share.

Vegetation rank and rotten
Feels the cheering ray;
Not uncared for, unforgotten,
We, too, have our day.
Unforgotten! though we cumber
Earth, we work His will.
Shall we sleep through night's long slumber
Unforgotten still?
Onward! onward! toiling ever,
Weary steps and slow,
Doubting oft, despairing never,
To the goal we go!

Hark! the bells on distant cattle
Waft across the range,
Through the golden-tufted wattle,
Music low and strange;
Like the marriage peal of fairies
Comes the tinkling sound,
Or like chimes of sweet St. Mary's [1]
On far English ground.
How my courser champs the snaffle,
And with nostril spread,
Snorts and scarcely seems to ruffle
Fern leaves with his tread;
Cool and pleasant on his haunches
Blows the evening breeze,
Through the overhanging branches
Of the wattle trees:

[1] Note 6, p. 375.

Onward! to the Southern Ocean,
Glides the breath of Spring,
Onward, with a dreamy motion,
I, too, glide and sing—
Forward! forward! still we wander—
Tinted hills that lie
In the red horizon yonder—
Is the goal so nigh?

Whisper, spring-wind, softly singing,
Whisper in my ear;
Respite and nepenthe bringing,
Can the goal be near?
Laden with the dew of vespers,
From the fragrant sky,
In my ear the wind that whispers
Seems to make reply—

'Question not, but live and labour
Till yon goal be won,
Helping every feeble neighbour,
Seeking help from none;
Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone,
KINDNESS in another's trouble,
COURAGE in your own.'

Courage, comrades, this is certain,
All is for the best—
There are lights behind the curtain—
Gentles let us rest.

As the smoke-rack veers to seaward
From 'the ancient clay',
With its moral drifting leeward,
Ends the wanderer's lay.

BORROW'D PLUMES

[A PREFACE AND A PIRACY]

PROLOGUE

Of borrow'd plumes I take the sin,
My extracts will apply
To some few silly songs which in
These pages scatter'd lie.

The words are Edgar Allan Poe's,
As any man may see,
But what a *Poe*-t wrote in prose,
Shall make blank verse for me.

These trifles are collected and republished, chiefly with a view to their redemption from the many improvements to which they have been subjected while going at random the rounds of the press. I am naturally anxious that what I have written should circulate as I wrote it, if it circulate at all. . . . In defence of my own taste, nevertheless, it is incumbent upon me to say that I think nothing in this volume of much value to the public, or very creditable to myself.

E. A. P.

(See Preface to Poe's Poetical Works)

EPILOGUE

And now that my theft stands detected,
The first of my extracts may call
To some of the rhymes here collected
Your notice, the second to all

Ah! friend, you may shake your head sadly,
Yet this much you'll say for my verse,
I've written of old something badly,
But written anew something worse.

PASTOR CUM[1]

[TRANSLATION FROM HORACE]

WHEN he, that shepherd false, 'neath Phrygian sail;
Carried his hostess Helen o'er the seas,
In fitful slumber Nereus hush'd the gales,
That he might sing their future destinies.
A curse to your ancestral home you take
With her, whom Greece, with many a soldier bold,
Shall seek again, in concert sworn to break
Your nuptial ties and Priam's kingdom old.
Alas! what sweat from man and horse must flow,
What devastation to the Trojan realm
You carry, even now doth Pallas show
Her wrath—preparing buckler, car, and helm.
In vain, secure in Aphrodite's care,
You comb your locks, and on the girlish lyre
Select the strains most pleasant to the fair;
In vain, on couch reclining, you desire
To shun the darts that threaten, and the thrust
Of Cretan lance, the battle's wild turmoil,
And Ajax swift to follow—in the dust
Condemned, though late, your wanton curls to soil.
Ah! see you not where (fatal to your race)
Laertes' son comes with the Pylean sage;

[1] Note 7, p. 375.

Fearless alike, with Teucer joins the chase
  Steneläus, skill'd the fistic strife to wage,
Nor less expert the fiery steeds to quell;
  And Meriones, you must know. Behold
A warrior, than his sire more fierce and fell,
  To find you rages,—Diomed the bold,
Whom, like the stag that, far across the vale,
  The wolf being seen, no herbage can allure,
So fly you, panting sorely, dastard pale!—
  Not thus you boasted to your paramour.
Achilles' anger for a space defers
  The day of wrath to Troy and Trojan dame;
Inevitable glide the allotted years,
  And Dardan roofs must waste in Argive flame

A LEGEND OF MADRID

[TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH]

Francesca

Crush'd and throng'd are all the places
  In our amphitheatre,
'Midst a sea of swarming faces
  I can yet distinguish her;
Dost thou triumph, dark-brow'd Nina?
  Is my secret known to thee?
On the sands of yon arena
  I shall yet my vengeance see.
Now through portals fast careering
Picadors are disappearing;
Now the barriers nimbly clearing
  Has the hindmost chulo flown.
Clots of dusky crimson streaking,

Brindled flanks and haunches reeking,
Wheels the wild bull, vengeance seeking,
On the matador alone.

Features by sombrero shaded,
Pale and passionless and cold;
Doublet richly laced and braided,
Trunks of velvet slash'd with gold,
Blood-red scarf, and bare Toledo,—
Mask more subtle, and disguise
Far less shallow, thou dost need, oh
Traitor, to deceive my eyes.
Shouts of noisy acclamation,
Breathing savage expectation,
Greet him while he takes his station
Leisurely, disdaining haste;
Now he doffs his tall sombrero,
Fools! applaud your butcher hero,
Ye would idolize a Nero,
Pandering to public taste.

From the restless Guadalquivir
To my sire's estates he came,
Woo'd and won me, how I shiver!
Though my temples burn with shame.
I, a proud and high-born lady,
Daughter of an ancient race,
'Neath the vine and olive shade I
Yielded to a churl's embrace.
To a churl my vows were plighted,
Well my madness he requited,
Since, by priestly ties, united
To the muleteer's child,

And my prayers are wafted o'er him,
That the bull may crush and gore him,
Since the love that once I bore him
Has been changed to hatred wild.

Nina

Save him! aid him! oh Madonna!
Two are slain if he is slain;
Shield his life, and guard his honour,
Let me not entreat in vain.
Sullenly the brindled savage
Tears and tosses up the sand;
Horns that rend and hoofs that ravage,
How shall man your shock withstand?
On the shaggy neck and head lie
Frothy flakes, the eyeballs redly
Flash, the horns so sharp and deadly
Lower, short, and strong, and straight;
Fast, and furious, and fearless,
Now he charges;—Virgin peerless,
Lifting lids all dry and tearless,
At thy throne I supplicate.

Francesca

Cool and calm, the perjured varlet
Stands on strongly planted heel,
In his left a strip of scarlet,
In his right a streak of steel;
Ah! the monster topples over,
Till his haunches strike the plain!—
Low-born clown and lying lover,
Thou hast conquer'd once again.

Nina

Sweet Madonna, Maiden Mother,
Thou hast saved him, and no other;
Now the tears I cannot smother,
  Tears of joy my vision blind;
Where thou sittest I am gazing,
These glad, misty eyes upraising,
I have pray'd, and I am praising,
  Bless thee! bless thee! Virgin kind.

Francesca

While the crowd still sways and surges,
  Ere the applauding shouts have ceas'd,
See, the second bull emerges—
  'Tis the famed Cordovan beast,—
By the picador ungoaded,
  Scathless of the chulo's dart.
Slay him, and with guerdon loaded,
  And with honours crown'd depart.
No vain brutish strife he wages,
Never uselessly he rages,
And his cunning, as he ages,
  With his hatred seems to grow;
Though he stands amid the cheering,
Sluggish to the eye appearing,
Few will venture on the spearing
  Of so resolute a foe.

Nina

Courage, there is little danger,
  Yonder dull-eyed craven seems
Fitter far for stall and manger
  Than for scarf and blade that gleams;

Shorter, and of frame less massive,
Than his comrade lying low,
Tame, and cowardly, and passive,—
He will prove a feebler foe.
I have done with doubt and anguish,
Fears like dews in sunshine languish,
Courage, husband, we shall vanquish,
Thou art calm and so am I.
For the rush he has not waited,
On he strides with step elated,
And the steel with blood unsated,
Leaps to end the butchery.

Francesca

Tyro! mark the brands of battle
On those shoulders dusk and dun,
Such as he is are the cattle
Skill'd tauridors gladly shun;
Warier than the Andalusian,
Swifter far, though not so large,
Think'st thou, to his own confusion,
He, like him, will blindly charge?
Inch by inch the brute advances,
Stealthy yet vindictive glances,
Horns as straight as levell'd lances,
Crouching withers, stooping haunches;—
Closer yet, until the tightening
Strains of rapt excitement height'ning
Grows oppressive. Ha! like lightning
On his enemy he launches.

Nina

O'er the horn'd front drops the streamer,
In the nape the sharp steel hisses,
Glances, grazes,—Christ! Redeemer!
By a hair the spine he misses.

Francesca

Hark! that shock like muffled thunder,
Booming from the Pyrenees!
Both are down—the man is under—
Now he struggles to his knees,
Now he sinks, his features leaden,
Sharpen rigidly and deaden,
Sands beneath him soak and redden,
Skies above him spin and veer;
Through the doublet, torn and riven,
Where the stunted horn was driven,
Wells the life-blood—We are even,
Daughter of the muleteer!

FAUCONSHAWE

(A BALLAD)

To fetch clear water out of the spring
The little maid Margaret ran,
From the stream to the castle's western wing
It was but a bowshot span;
On the sedgy brink where the osiers cling
Lay a dead man, pallid and wan.

The lady Mabel rose from her bed,
And walked in the castle hall,
Where the porch through the western turret led
She met with her handmaid small.
'What aileth thee, Margaret?' the lady said,
'Hast let thy pitcher fall?

'Say, what hast thou seen by the streamlet side—
A nymph or a water sprite—
That thou comest with eyes so wild and wide,
And with cheeks so ghostly white?'
'Nor nymph nor sprite,' the maiden cried,
'But the corpse of a slaughtered knight.'

The lady Mabel summon'd straight
To her presence Sir Hugh de Vere,
Of the guests who tarried within the gate
Of Fauconshawe, most dear
Was he to that lady; betrothed in state
They had been since many a year.

'Little Margaret sayeth a dead man lies
By the western spring, Sir Hugh;
I can scarce believe that the maiden lies—
Yet scarce can believe her true.'
And the knight replies, 'Till we test her eyes
Let her words gain credence due.'

Down the rocky path knight and lady led,
While guests and retainers bold
Followed in haste, for like wildfire spread
The news by the maiden told.
They found 'twas even as she had said—
The corpse had some while been cold.

How the spirit had pass'd in the moments last
There was little trace to reveal ;
On the still calm face lay no imprint ghast,
Save the angel's solemn seal,
Yet the hands were clench'd in a death-grip fast,
And the sods stamp'd down by the heel.

Sir Hugh by the side of the dead man knelt,
Said, ' Full well these features I know,
We have faced each other where blows were dealt,
And he was a stalwart foe ;
I had rather have met him hilt to hilt,
Than have found him lying low.'

He turned the body up on its face,
And never a word was spoken,
While he ripp'd the doublet, and tore the lace,
And tugg'd—by the self-same token,—
And strain'd, till he wrench'd it out of its place,
The dagger-blade that was broken.

Then he turned the body over again,
And said, while he rose upright,
' May the brand of Cain, with its withering stain,
On the murderer's forehead light,
For he never was slain on the open plain,
Nor yet in the open fight.'

Solemn and stern were the words he spoke,
And he look'd at his lady's men,
But his speech no answering echoes woke,
All were silent there and then,
Till a clear, cold voice the silence broke :—
Lady Mabel cried, ' Amen.'

His glance met hers, the twain stood hush'd,
With the dead between them there ;
But the blood to her snowy temples rush'd
Till it tinged the roots of her hair,
Then paled, but a thin red streak still flush'd
In the midst of her forehead fair.

Four yeomen raised the corpse from the ground,
At a sign from Sir Hugh de Vere,
It was borne to the western turret round,
And laid on a knightly bier,
With never a sob nor a mourning sound,—
No friend to the dead was near.

Yet that night was neither revel nor dance
In the halls of Fauconshawe ;
Men looked askance with a doubtful glance
At Sir Hugh, for they stood in awe
Of his prowess, but he, like one in a trance,
Regarded naught that he saw.

. . . . . .

Night black and chill, wind gathering still,
With its wail in the turret tall,
And its headlong blast like a catapult cast
On the crest of the outer wall,
And its hail and rain on the crashing pane,
Till the glassy splinters fall.

A moody knight by the fitful light
Of the great hall fire below ;
A corpse upstairs, and a woman at prayers,
Will they profit her, aye or no ?
By'r lady fain, an she comfort gain,
There is comfort for us also.

The guests were gone, save Sir Hugh alone,
And he watched the gleams that broke
On the pale hearth-stone, and flickered and shone
On the panels of polish'd oak ;
He was 'ware of no presence except his own,
Till the voice of young Margaret spoke :

'I've risen, Sir Hugh, at the mirk midnight,
I cannot sleep in my bed,
Now, unless my tale can be told aright,
I wot it were best unsaid ;
It lies, the blood of yon northern knight,
On my lady's hand and head.'

'Oh ! the wild wind raves and rushes along,
But thy ravings seem more wild—
She never could do so foul a wrong—
Yet I blame thee not, my child,
For the fever'd dreams on thy rest that throng ! '—
He frown'd though his speech was mild.

'Let storm winds eddy, and scream, and hurl
Their wrath, they disturb me naught ;
The daughter she of a high-born earl,
No secret of hers I've sought ;
I am but the child of a peasant churl,
Yet look to the proofs I've brought ;

'This dagger snapp'd so close to the hilt—
Dost remember thy token well ?
Will it match with the broken blade that spilt
His life in the western dell ?
Nay ! read her handwriting, an thou wilt,
From her paramour's breast it fell.'

The knight in silence the letter read,
Oh ! the characters well he knew !
And his face might have match'd the face of the dead,
So ashen white was its hue !
Then he tore the parchment shred by shred,
And the strips in the flames he threw.

And he muttered, ' Densely those shadows fall
In the copse where the alders thicken ;
There she bade him come to her, once for all,—
Now, I well may shudder and sicken ;—
Gramercy ! that hand so white and small,
How strongly it must have stricken.'

. . . . . .

At midnight hour, in the western tower,
Alone with the dead man there,
Lady Mabel kneels, nor heeds nor feels
The shock of the rushing air,
Though the gusts that pass through the riven glass
Have scattered her raven hair.

Across the floor, through the opening door,
Where standeth a stately knight,
The lamplight streams, and flickers, and gleams,
On his features stern and white—
'Tis Sir Hugh de Vere, and he cometh more near,
And the lady standeth upright.

' 'Tis little,' he said, ' that I know or care
Of the guilt (if guilt there be)
That lies 'twixt thee and yon dead man there,
Nor matters it now to me ;
I thought thee pure, thou art only fair,
And to-morrow I cross the sea.

'He perish'd! I ask not why or how:
I come to recall my troth;
Take back, my lady, thy broken vow,
Give back my allegiance oath;
Let the past be buried between us now
For ever—'tis best for both.

'Yet, Mabel, I could ask, dost thou dare
Lay hand on that corpse's heart,
And call on thy Maker, and boldly swear
That thou hadst in his death no part?
I ask not, while threescore proofs I share
With one doubt—uncondemn'd thou art.'

Oh! cold and bleak upon Mabel's cheek
Came the blast of the storm-wind keen,
And her tresses black as the glossy back
Of the raven, glanced between
Her fingers slight, like the ivory white,
As she parted their sable sheen.

Yet with steady lip, and with fearless eye,
And with cheek like the flush of dawn,
Unflinchingly she spoke in reply—
'Go hence with the break of morn,
I will neither confess, nor yet deny,
I will return thee scorn for scorn.'

The knight bow'd low as he turn'd to go;
He travell'd by land and sea,
But naught of his future fate I know,
And naught of his fair ladye;—
My story is told as, long ago,
My story was told to me.

RIPPLING WATER

THE maiden sat by the river side
(The rippling water murmurs by),
And sadly into the clear blue tide
The salt tear fell from her clear blue eye.
'Tis fixed for better, for worse,' she cried,
'And to-morrow the bridegroom claims the bride.
Oh! wealth and power and rank and pride
Can surely peace and happiness buy.
I was merry, nathless, in my girlhood's hours,
'Mid the waving grass, when the bright sun shone.
Shall I be as merry in Marmaduke's towers?'
(The rippling water murmurs on.)

Stephen works for his daily bread
(The rippling water murmurs low),
Through the crazy thatch that covers his head
The rain-drops fall and the wind-gusts blow.
'I'll mend the old roof-tree,' so he said,
'And repair the cottage when we are wed.'
And my pulses throbb'd, and my cheek grew red,
When he kiss'd me—that was long ago.
Stephen and I, should we meet again,
Not as we've met in days that are gone,
Will my pulses throb with pleasure or pain?
(The rippling water murmurs on.)

Old Giles, the gardener, strok'd my curls
(The rippling water murmurs past),
Quoth he, 'In laces and silks and pearls
My child will see her reflection cast;

Now I trust in my heart that your lord will be
Kinder to you than he was to me,
When I lay in the gaol, and my children three
With their sickly mother kept bitter fast.'
With Marmaduke now my will is law,
Marmaduke's will may be law anon ;
Does the sheath of velvet cover the claw ?
(The rippling water murmurs on.)

Dame Martha patted me on the cheek
(The rippling water murmurs low),
Saying, ' There are words that I fain would speak—
Perhaps they were best unspoken though ;
I can't persuade you to change your mind,
And useless warnings are scarcely kind,
And I may be foolish as well as blind,
But take my blessing whether or no.'
Dame Martha 's wise, though her hair is white,
Her sense is good, though her sight is gone—
Can she really be gifted with second sight ?
(The rippling water murmurs on.)

Brian of Hawksmede came to our cot
(The rippling water murmurs by),
Scatter'd the sods of our garden plot,
Riding his roan horse recklessly ;
Trinket and token and tress of hair,
He flung them down at the door-step there,
Said, ' Elsie ! ask your lord, if you dare,
Who gave him the blow as well as the lie.'

That evening I mentioned Brian's name,
And Marmaduke's face grew white and wan,
Am I pledged to one of a spirit so tame ?
(The rippling water murmurs on.)

Brian is headstrong, rash, and vain
(The rippling water murmurs still),
Stephen is somewhat duller of brain,
Slower of speech and milder of will ;
Stephen must toil a living to gain,
Plough and harrow and gather the grain ;
Brian has little enough to maintain
The station in life which he needs must fill ;
Both are fearless and kind and frank,
But we can't win all gifts under the sun—
What have I won save riches and rank ?
(The rippling water murmurs on.)

Riches and rank, and what beside
(The rippling water murmurs yet),
The mansion is stately, the manor is wide,
Their lord for a while may pamper and pet ;
Liveried lackeys may jeer aside,
Though the peasant girl is their master's bride,
At her shyness, mingled with awkward pride,—
'Twere folly for trifles like these to fret ;
But the love of one that I cannot love,
Will it last when the gloss of his toy is gone ?
Is there naught beyond, below, or above ?
(The rippling water murmurs on.)

CUI BONO

Oh! wind that whistles o'er thorns and thistles,
Of this fruitful earth like a goblin elf;
Why should he labour to help his neighbour
Who feels too reckless to help himself?
The wail of the breeze in the bending trees
Is something between a laugh and a groan;
And the hollow roar of the surf on the shore
Is a dull, discordant monotone;
I wish I could guess what sense they express,
There's a meaning, doubtless, in every sound,
Yet no one can tell, and it may be as well—
Whom would it profit? the world goes round!

On this earth so rough we know quite enough,
And, I sometimes fancy, a little too much;
The sage may be wiser than clown or than kaiser,
Is he more to be envied for being such?
Neither more nor less, in his idleness
The sage is doom'd to vexation sure;
The kaiser may rule, but the slippery stool,
That he calls his throne, is no sinecure;
And as for the clown, you may give him a crown,
Maybe he'll thank you, and maybe not,
And before you can wink, he may spend it in drink—
To whom does it profit?—We ripe and rot!

Yet under the sun much work is done
By clown and kaiser, by serf and sage;
All sow and some reap, and few gather the heap
Of the garner'd grain of a by-gone age.

By sea or by soil man is bound to toil,
And the dreamer, waiting for time and tide,
For awhile may shirk his share of the work,
But he grows with his dream dissatisfied ;
He may climb to the edge of the beetling ledge,
Where the loose crag topples and well-nigh reels
'Neath the lashing gale, but the tonic will fail—
What does it profit ?—Wheels within wheels !

Aye ! work we must, or with idlers rust,
And eat we must our bodies to nurse ;
Some folk grow fatter—what does it matter ?
I'm blest if I do—quite the reverse ;
'Tis a weary round to which we are bound,
The same thing over and over again ;
Much toil and trouble, and a glittering bubble,
That rises and bursts, is the best we gain ;
And we murmur, and yet 'tis certain we get
What good we deserve—can we hope for more ?—
They are roaring, those waves, in their echoing caves—
To whom do they profit ?—Let them roar !

BELLONA[1]

Thou art moulded in marble impassive,
False goddess, fair statue of strife,
Yet standest on pedestal massive,
A symbol and token of life.
Thou art still, not with stillness of languor,
And calm, not with calm boding rest ;
For thine is all wrath and all anger,
That throbs far and near in the breast
Of man, by thy presence possess'd.

[1] Note 8, p. 376.

With the brow of a fallen archangel,
  The lips of a beautiful fiend,
And locks that are snake-like to strangle,
  And eyes from whose depths may be glean'd
The presence of passions, that tremble
  Unbidden, yet shine as they may
Through features too proud to dissemble
  Too cold and too calm to betray
  Their secrets to creatures of clay.

Thy breath stirreth faction and party.
  Men rise, and no voice can avail
To stay them—rose-tinted Astarte
  Herself at thy presence turns pale.
For deeper and richer the crimson
  That gathers behind thee throws forth
A halo thy raiment and limbs on,
  And leaves a red track in the path
  That flows from thy wine-press of wrath.

For behind thee red rivulets trickle,
  Men fall by thy hands swift and lithe,
As corn falleth down to the sickle,
  As grass falleth down to the scythe.
Thine arm, strong and cruel, and shapely,
  Lifts high the sharp, pitiless lance,
And rapine and ruin and rape lie
  Around thee. The Furies advance,
  And Ares awakes from his trance.

We, too, with our bodies thus weakly,
  With hearts hard and dangerous, thus
We owe thee—the saints suffered meekly
  Their wrongs—it is not so with us.

Some share of thy strength thou hast given
To mortals refusing in vain
Thine aid. We have suffered and striven
Till we have grown reckless of pain,
Though feeble of heart and of brain.

Fair spirit, alluring if wicked,
False deity, terribly real,
Our senses are trapp'd, our souls trickèd
By thee and thy hollow ideal.
The soldier who falls in his harness,
And strikes his last stroke with slack hand,
On his dead face thy wrath and thy scorn is
Imprinted. Oh! seeks he a land
Where he shall escape thy command?

When the blood of thy victims lies red on
That stricken field, fiercest and last,
In the sunset that gilds Armageddon
With battle-drift still overcast—
When the smoke of thy hot conflagrations
O'ershadows the earth as with wings,
Where nations have fought against nations,
And kings have encounter'd with kings,
When cometh the end of all things.

Then those who have patiently waited,
And borne, unresisting, the pain
Of thy vengeance unglutted, unsated,
Shall they be rewarded again?

Then those who, enticed by thy laurels,
Or urged by thy promptings unblest,
Have striven and stricken in quarrels,
Shall they, too, find pardon and rest?
We know not, yet hope for the best.

THE SONG OF THE SURF

White steeds of ocean, that leap with a hollow and wearisome roar
On the bar of ironstone steep, not a fathom's length from the shore,
Is there never a seer nor sophist can interpret your wild refrain,
When speech the harshest and roughest is seldom studied in vain?
My ears are constantly smitten by that dreary monotone,
In a hieroglyphic 'tis written—'tis spoken in a tongue unknown;
Gathering, growing, and swelling, and surging, and shivering, say!
What is the tale you are telling? what is the drift of your lay?

You come, and your crests are hoary with the foam of your countless years;
You break, with a rainbow of glory, through the spray of your glittering tears.
Is your song a song of gladness? a paean of joyous might?
Or a wail of discordant sadness for the wrongs you never can right?

For the empty seat by the ingle ? for children reft of their sire ?
For the bride, sitting sad, and single, and pale, by the flickering fire ?
For your ravenous pools of suction ? for your shattering billow swell ?
For your ceaseless work of destruction ? for your hunger insatiable ?

Not far from this very place, on the sand and the shingle dry,
He lay, with his batter'd face upturned to the frowning sky.
When your waters wash'd and swill'd high over his drowning head,
When his nostrils and lungs were filled, when his feet and hands were as lead,
When against the rock he was hurl'd, and suck'd again to the sea,
On the shores of another world, on the brink of eternity,
On the verge of annihilation, did it come to that swimmer strong,
The sudden interpretation of your mystical weird-like song ?

'Mortal ! that which thou askest, ask not thou of the waves ;
Fool ! thou foolishly taskest us—we are only slaves ;
Might, more mighty, impels us—we must our lot fulfil,
He who gathers and swells us curbs us, too, at His will.

Think'st thou the wave that shatters questioneth His
decree ?
Little to us it matters, and naught it matters to thee.
Not thus, murmuring idly, we from our duty would
swerve,
Over the world spread widely ever we labour and serve.'

WHISPERINGS IN WATTLE-BOUGHS

Oh, gaily sings the bird, and the wattle-boughs are stirr'd
And rustled by the scented breath of spring ;
Oh, the dreary, wistful longing ! Oh, the faces that are
thronging !
Oh, the voices that are vaguely whispering !

Oh, tell me, father mine, ere the good ship cross'd the
brine,
On the gangway one mute hand-grip we exchanged,
Do you, past the grave, employ, for your stubborn
reckless boy,
Those petitions that in life were ne'er estranged ?

Oh, tell me, sister dear, parting word and parting tear
Never pass'd between us ;—let me bear the blame.
Are you living, girl, or dead ? bitter tears since then
I've shed
For the lips that lisp'd with mine a mother's name.

Oh, tell me, ancient friend, ever ready to defend,
In our boyhood, at the base of life's long hill,
Are you waking yet, or sleeping ? have you left this
vale of weeping ?
Or do you, like your comrade, linger still ?

Oh, whisper, buried love, is there rest and peace
above ?—
There is little hope or comfort here below ;—
On your sweet face lies the mould, and your bed is
strait and cold—
Near the harbour where the sea-tides ebb and flow.

. . . . .

All silent—they are dumb—and the breezes go and
come
With an apathy that mocks at man's distress ;
Laugh, scoffer, while you may ! I could bow me down
and pray
For an answer that might stay my bitterness.

Oh, harshly screams the bird ! and the wattle-bloom is
stirr'd !
There's a sullen weird-like whisper in the bough :
'Aye, kneel, and pray, and weep, but HIS BELOVED
SLEEP
CAN NEVER BE DISTURB'D BY SUCH AS THOU ! !'

CONFITEOR

THE shore-boat lies in the morning light,
By the good ship ready for sailing ;
The skies are clear, and the dawn is bright,
Tho' the bar of the bay is fleck'd with white,
And the wind is fitfully wailing ;
Near the tiller stands the priest, and the knight
Leans over the quarter-railing.

'There is time while the vessel tarries still,
  There is time while her shrouds are slack,
There is time ere her sails to the west-wind fill,
Ere her tall masts vanish from town and from hill,
  Ere cleaves to her keel the track;
There is time for confession to those who will,
  To those who may never come back.'

'Sir priest, you can shrive these men of mine,
  And I pray you, shrive them fast,
And shrive those hardy sons of the brine,
Captain and mates of the *Eglantine*,
  And sailors before the mast;
Then pledge me a cup of the Cyprus wine,
  For I fain would bury the past.'

'And hast thou naught to repent, my son?
  Dost thou scorn confession and shrift?
Ere thy sands from the glass of time shall run
Is there naught undone that thou should'st have done,
  Naught done that thou should'st have left?
The guiltiest soul may from guilt be won,
  And the stoniest heart may be cleft.'

'Have my ears been closed to the prayer of the poor,
  Or deaf to the cry of distress?
Have I given little, and taken more?
Have I brought a curse to the widow's door?
  Have I wrong'd the fatherless?
Have I steep'd my fingers in guiltless gore,
  That I must perforce confess?'

'Have thy steps been guided by purity
Through the paths with wickedness rife?
Hast thou never smitten thine enemy?
Hast thou yielded naught to the lust of the eye,
And naught to the pride of life?
Hast thou pass'd all snares of pleasure by?
Hast thou shunn'd all wrath and all strife?'

'Nay, certes! a sinful life I've led,
Yet I've suffer'd, and lived in hope;
I may suffer still, but my hope has fled,—
I've nothing now to hope or to dread,
And with fate I can fairly cope;
Were the waters closing over my head,
I should scarcely catch at a rope.'

'Dost suffer? thy pain may be fraught with grace,
Since never by works alone
We are saved; —the penitent thief may trace
The wealth of love in the Saviour's face
To the Pharisee rarely shown;
And the Magdalene's arms may yet embrace
The foot of the jasper throne.'

'Sir priest, a heavier doom I dree,
For I feel no quickening pain,
But a dull dumb weight, when I bow my knee,
And (not with the words of the Pharisee)
My hard eyes heavenward strain,
Where my dead darling prayeth for me!
Now, I wot, she prayeth in vain!

'Still I hear it over the battle's din,
And over the festive cheer,—
So she pray'd with clasp'd hands, white and thin,—
The prayer of a soul absolved from sin,
For a soul that is dark and drear,
For the light of repentance bursting in,
And the flood of the blinding tear.

'Say, priest! when the saint must vainly plead,
Oh! how shall the sinner fare?
I hold your comfort a broken reed;
Let the wither'd branch for itself take heed,
While the green shoots wait your care;
I've striven, though feebly, to grasp your creed,
And I've grappled my own despair.'

'By the little within thee, good and brave,
Not wholly shattered, though shaken;
By the soul that crieth beyond the grave,
The love that He once in His mercy gave,
In His mercy since retaken,
I conjure thee, oh sinner! pardon crave!
I implore thee, oh sleeper, waken!'

'Go to! shall I lay my black soul bare
To a vain self-righteous man?
In my sin, in my sorrow, you may not share,
And yet, could I meet with one who must bear
The load of an equal ban,
With him I might strive to blend one prayer,
The wail of the Publican.'

'My son, I too am a withered bough,
My place is to others given;
Thou hast sinn'd, thou sayest; I ask not how,
For I too have sinn'd, even as thou,
And I too have feebly striven,
And with thee I must bow, crying, "Shrive us now!
Our Father which art in heaven!"'

SUNLIGHT ON THE SEA

[THE PHILOSOPHY OF A FEAST]

MAKE merry, comrades, eat and drink
(The sunlight flickers on the sea),
The garlands gleam, the glasses clink,
The grape juice mantles fair and free,
The lamps are trimm'd, although the light
Of day still lingers on the sky;
We sit between the day and night,
And push the wine-flask merrily
I see you feasting round me still,
All gay of heart and strong of limb;
Make merry, friends, your glasses fill,
The lights are growing dim.

I miss the voice of one I've heard
(The sunlight sinks upon the sea),
He sang as blythe as any bird,
And shook the rafters with his glee;
But times have changed with him, I wot,
By fickle fortune cross'd and flung;
Far stouter heart than mine he's got
If now he sings as then he sung.

Yet some must swim when others sink,
And some must sink when others swim;
Make merry, comrades, eat and drink,
The lights are growing dim.

I miss the face of one I've loved—
(The sunlight settles on the sea;)
Long since to distant climes he roved;
He had his faults, and so have we;
His name was mentioned here this day,
And it was coupled with a sneer;
I heard, nor had I aught to say,
Though once I held his memory dear.
Who cares, 'mid wines and fruits and flowers,
Though death or danger compass him,
He had his faults, and we have ours,
The lights are growing dim.

I miss the form of one I know—
(The sunlight wanes upon the sea)
'Tis not so very long ago;
We drank his health with three-times-three,
And we were gay when he was here;
And he is gone, and we are gay.
Where has he gone? or far or near?
Good sooth, 'twere somewhat hard to say.
You glance aside, you doubtless think
My homily a foolish whim,
'Twill soon be ended, eat and drink,
The lights are growing dim.

The fruit is ripe, the wine is red;
(The sunlight fades upon the sea.)
To us the absent are the dead,
The dead to us must absent be.
We, too, the absent ranks must join;
And friends will censure and forget:
There's metal base in every coin;
Men vanish, leaving traces yet
Of evil and of good behind,
Since false notes taint the skylark's hymn,
And dross still lurks in gold refined—
The lights are growing dim.

We eat and drink or ere we die,
(The sunlight flushes on the sea.)
Three hundred soldiers feasted high
An hour before Thermopylae;
Leonidas pour'd out the wine,
And shouted ere he drain'd the cup,
'Ho! comrades, let us gaily dine—
This night with Pluto we shall sup;'
And if they leant upon a reed,
And if their reed was slight and slim,
There 's something good in Spartan creed—
The lights are growing dim.

Make merry, comrades, eat and drink,
(The sunlight flashes on the sea;)
My spirit is rejoiced to think
That even as they were so are we;

For they, like us, were mortals vain,
The slaves to earthly passions wild,
Who slept with heaps of Persians slain
For winding-sheets around them piled.
The dead man's deeds are living still—
My Festive speech is somewhat grim—
Their good obliterates their ill—
The lights are growing dim.

We eat and drink, we come and go,
(The sunlight dies upon the sea.)
I speak in riddles. Is it so?
My riddles need not mar your glee;
For I will neither bid you share
My thoughts, nor will I bid you shun,
Though I should see in yonder chair
Th' Egyptian's muffled skeleton.
One toast with me, your glasses fill,
Aye, fill them level with the brim,
De mortuis, nisi bonum, nil!
The lights are growing dim.

DELILAH

[FROM A PICTURE]

THE sun has gone down, spreading wide on
The sky-line one ray of red fire;
Prepare the soft cushions of Sidon,
Make ready the rich loom of Tyre.

The day, with its toil and its sorrow,
  Its shade, and its sunshine, at length
Has ended; dost fear for the morrow,
  Strong man, in the pride of thy strength?

Like fire-flies, heavenward clinging,
  They multiply, star upon star;
And the breeze a low murmur is bringing
  From the tents of my people afar.
Nay, frown not, I am but a Pagan,
  Yet little for these things I care;
'Tis the hymn to our deity Dagon,
  That comes with the pleasant night-air.

It shall not disturb thee, nor can it;
  See, closed are the curtains, the lights
Gleam down on the cloven pomegranate,
  Whose thirst-slaking nectar invites;
The red wine of Hebron glows brightly
  In yon goblet—the draught of a king;
And through the silk awning steals lightly
  The sweet song my handmaidens sing.

Dost think that thy God, in His anger,
  Will trifle with nature's great laws,
And slacken those sinews in languor
  That battled so well in His cause?
Will He take back that strength He has given,
  Because to the pleasures of youth
Thou yieldest? Nay, God-like, in heaven,
  He laughs at such follies, forsooth.

Oh! were I, for good or for evil,
As great and as gifted as thou,
Neither God should restrain me, nor devil,
To none like a slave would I bow.
If fate must indeed overtake thee,
And feebleness come to thy clay,
Pause not till thy strength shall forsake thee,
Enjoy it the more in thy day.

Oh! fork'd-tongue of adder, by her pent
In smooth lips!—oh, Sybarite blind!
Oh, woman allied to the serpent!
Oh, beauty with venom combined!
Oh, might overcoming the mighty!
Oh, glory departing! oh, shame!
Oh, altar of false Aphrodite,
What strength is consumed in thy flame.

Strong chest, where her drapery rustles,
Strong limbs by her black tresses hid
Not alone by the might of your muscles
Yon lion was rent like a kid!
The valour from virtue that sunders,
Is reft of its nobler part;
And Lancelot's arm may work wonders,
But braver is Galahad's heart.

Sleep sound on that breast fair and ample;
Dull brain, and dim eyes, and deaf ears,
Feel not the cold touch on your temple,
Heed not the faint clash of the shears.

It comes !—with the gleam of the lamps on
The curtains—that voice—does it jar
On thy soul in the night-watch ? Ho ! Samson,
Upon thee the Philistines are.

FROM LIGHTNING AND TEMPEST

The spring-wind pass'd through the forest, and whispered low in the leaves,
And the cedar toss'd her head, and the oak stood firm in his pride ;
The spring-wind pass'd through the town, through the housetops, casements, and eaves,
And whisper'd low in the hearts of the men, and the men replied,
Singing—' Let us rejoice in the light
Of our glory, and beauty, and might ;
Let us follow our own devices, and foster our own desires.
As firm as our oaks in our pride, as our cedars fair in our sight,
We stand like the trees of the forest that brave the frosts and the fires.'

The storm went forth to the forest, the plague went forth to the town,
And the men fell down to the plague, as the trees fell down to the gale ;
And their bloom was a ghastly pallor, and their smile was a ghastly frown,
And the song of their hearts was changed to a wild, disconsolate wail.

Crying—'God! we have sinn'd, we have sinn'd,
We are bruised, we are shorn, we are thinn'd,
Our strength is turn'd to derision, our pride laid low in the dust,
Our cedars are cleft by Thy lightnings, our oaks are strew'd by Thy wind,
And we fall on our faces seeking Thine aid, though Thy wrath is just.'

WORMWOOD AND NIGHTSHADE

The troubles of life are many,
The pleasures of life are few;
When we sat in the sunlight, Annie,
I dreamt that the skies were blue—
When we sat in the sunlight, Annie,
I dreamt that the earth was green;
There is little colour, if any,
'Neath the sunlight now to be seen.

Then the rays of the sunset glinted
Through the blackwoods' emerald bough
On an emerald sward, rose-tinted,
And spangled, and gemm'd;—and now
The rays of the sunset redden
With a sullen and lurid frown,
From the skies that are dark and leaden,
To earth that is dusk and brown.

To right and to left extended
The uplands are blank and drear,
And their neutral tints are blended
With the dead leaves sombre and sere:

The cold grey mist from the still side
  Of the lake creeps sluggish and sure,
Bare and bleak is the hill side,
  Barren and bleak the moor.

Bright hues and shapes intertwisted,
  Fair forms and rich colours ;—now
They have flown—if e'er they existed—
  It matters not why or how.
It matters not where or when, dear,
  They have flown, the blue and the green,
I thought on what might be then, dear,
  Now I think on what might have been.

What might have been !—words of folly ;
  What might be !—speech for a fool ;
With mistletoe round me, and holly,
  Scarlet and green, at Yule,
With the elm in the place of the wattle,
  And in lieu of the gum, the oak,
Years back I believed a little,
  And as I believed I spoke.

Have I done with those childish fancies ?
  They suited the days gone by,
When I pulled the poppies and pansies,
  When I hunted the butterfly,
With one who has long been sleeping,
  A stranger to doubts and cares,
And to sowing that ends in reaping
  Thistles, and thorns, and tares.

What might be!—the dreams were scatter'd,
As chaff is toss'd by the wind,
The faith has been rudely shattered
That listen'd with credence blind;
Things were to have been, and therefore
They were, and they are to be,
And will be;—we must prepare for
The doom we are bound to dree.

Ah me! we believe in evil,
Where once we believed in good,
The world, the flesh, and the devil
Are easily understood;
The world, the flesh, and the devil,
Their traces on earth are plain;
Must they always riot and revel
While footprints of man remain?

Talk about better and wiser,
Wiser and worse are one,
The sophist is the despiser
Of all things under the sun;
Is nothing real but confusion?
Is nothing certain but death?
Is nothing fair save illusion?
Is nothing good that has breath?

Some sprite, malignant and elfish,
Seems present, whispering close,
'All motives of life are selfish,
All instincts of life are gross;

And the song that the poet fashions,
  And the love-bird's musical strain,
Are jumbles of animal passions,
  Refined by animal pain.'

The restless throbbings and burnings
  That hope unsatisfied brings,
The weary longings and yearnings
  For the mystical better things,
Are the sands on which is reflected
  The pitiless moving lake,
Where the wanderer falls dejected,
  By a thirst he never can slake.

A child blows bubbles that glitter,
  He snatches them, they disperse;
Yet childhood's folly is better,
  And manhood's folly is worse;
Gilt baubles we grasp at blindly
  Would turn in our hands to dross;
'Tis a fate less cruel than kindly
  Denies the gain and the loss.

And as one who pursues a shadow,
  As one who hunts in a dream,
As the child who crosses the meadow,
  Enticed by the rainbow's gleam,
I—knowing the course was foolish,
  And guessing the goal was pain,
Stupid, and stubborn, and mulish—
  Followed and follow again.

The sun over Gideon halted,
  Holding aloof the night,
When Joshua's arm was exalted,
  Yet never retraced his flight;
Nor will he turn back, nor can he,
  He chases the future fast;
The future is blank—oh, Annie!
  I fain would recall the past.

There are others toiling and straining
  'Neath burdens graver than mine;
They are weary, yet uncomplaining—
  I know it, yet I repine;
I know it, how time will ravage,
  How time will level, and yet
I long with a longing savage,
  I regret with a fierce regret.

You are no false ideal,
  Something is left of you,
Present, perceptible, real,
  Palpable, tangible, true;
One shred of your broken necklace,
  One tress of your pale gold hair,
And a heart so utterly reckless,
  That the worst it would gladly dare.

There is little pleasure, if any,
  In waking the past anew;
My days and nights have been many;
  Lost chances many I rue—

My days and nights have been many;
Now I pray that they be few,
When I think on the hill-side, Annie,
Where I dreamt that the skies were blue.

ARS LONGA

[A SONG OF PILGRIMAGE]

OUR hopes are wild imaginings,
Our schemes are airy castles,
Yet these, on earth, are lords and kings,
And we their slaves and vassals;
Yon dream, forsooth, of buoyant youth,
Most ready to deceive is,
But age will own the bitter truth,
'*Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

The hill of life with eager feet
We climbed in merry morning,
But on the downward track we meet
The shades of twilight warning;
The shadows gaunt they fall aslant;
And those who scaled Ben Nevis,
Against the mole-hills toil and pant,
'*Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

The obstacles that barr'd our path
We seldom quail'd to dash on
In youth, for youth one motto hath,
'The will, the way must fashion.'

Those words, I wot, blood thick and hot,
Too ready to believe is,
But thin and cold our blood hath got,
'*Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

And 'art is long', and 'life is short',
And man is slow at learning;
And yet by divers dealings taught,
For divers follies yearning,
He owns at last, with grief downcast
(For man disposed to grieve is)—
One adage old stands true and fast,
'*Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

We journey, manhood, youth, and age,
The matron, and the maiden,
Like pilgrims on a pilgrimage,
Loins girded, heavy laden:—
Each pilgrim strong, who joins our throng,
Most eager to achieve is,
Foredoom'd ere long to swell the song,
'*Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

At morn, with staff and sandal-shoon,
We travel brisk and cheery,
But some have laid them down ere noon,
And all at eve are weary;
The noontide glows with no repose,
And bitter chill the eve is,
The grasshopper a burden grows,
'*Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

The staff is snapp'd, the sandal fray'd,
The flint-stone galls and blisters,
Our brother's steps we cannot aid,
Ah me! nor aid our sister's:
The pit prepares its hidden snares,
The rock prepared to cleave is,
We cry, in falling unawares,
'*Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

Oh! Wisdom, which we sought to win!
Oh! Strength, in which we trusted!
Oh! Glory, which we gloried in!
Oh! puppets we adjusted!
On barren land our seed is sand,
And torn the web we weave is,
The bruisèd reed hath pierced the hand,
'*Ars longa, vita brevis.*'

We, too, 'Job's comforters' have met,
With steps, like ours, unsteady,
They could not help themselves, and yet
To judge us they were ready;
Life's path is trod at last, and God
More ready to reprieve is,
They know, who rest beneath the sod,
Mors grata, vita brevis.'

THE LAST LEAP

All is over! fleet career,
Dash of greyhound slipping thongs,
Flight of falcon, bound of deer,
Mad hoof-thunder in our rear,
Cold air rushing up our lungs,
Din of many tongues.

Once again, one struggle good,
One vain effort;—he must dwell
Near the shifted post, that stood
Where the splinters of the wood,
Lying in the torn tracks, tell
How he struck and fell.

Crest where cold drops beaded cling,
Small ear drooping, nostril full,
Glazing to a scarlet ring,
Flanks and haunches quivering,
Sinews stiff'ning, void and null,
Dumb eyes sorrowful.

Satin coat that seems to shine
Duller now, black braided tress,
That a softer hand than mine
Far away was wont to twine,
That in meadows far from this
Softer lips might kiss.

All is over! this is death,
And I stand to watch thee die,
Brave old horse! with 'bated breath
Hardly drawn through tight-clenched teeth,
Lip indented deep, but eye
Only dull and dry.

Musing on the husk and chaff
Gather'd where life's tares are sown,
Thus I speak, and force a laugh
That is half a sneer and half
An involuntary groan,
In a stifled tone—

'Rest, old friend! thy day, though rife
With its toil, hath ended soon;
We have had our share of strife,
Tumblers in the mask of life,
In the pantomime of noon
Clown and pantaloon.

'With the flash that ends thy pain
Respite and oblivion blest
Come to greet thee. I in vain
Fall: I rise to fall again:
Thou hast fallen to thy rest—
And thy fall is best!'

QUARE FATIGASTI[1]

Two years ago I was thinking
On the changes that years bring forth;
Now I stand where I then stood drinking
The gust and the salt sea froth;
And the shuddering wave strikes, linking
With the waves subsiding and sinking,
And clots the coast herbage, shrinking,
With the hue of the white cere-cloth.

Is there aught worth losing or keeping?
The bitters or sweets men quaff?
The sowing or the doubtful reaping?
The harvest of grain or chaff?

[1] Note 9, p. 376.

Or squandering days or heaping,
Or waking seasons or sleeping,
The laughter that dries the weeping,
Or the weeping that drowns the laugh?

For joys wax dim and woes deaden,
We forget the sorrowful biers,
And the garlands glad that have fled in
The merciful march of years;
And the sunny skies and the leaden,
And the faces that pale or redden,
And the smiles that lovers are wed in
Who are born and buried in tears.

And the myrtle bloom turns hoary,
And the blush of the rose decays,
And sodden with sweat and gory
Are the hard won laurels and bays;
We are neither joyous nor sorry
When time has ended our story,
And blotted out grief and glory,
And pain, and pleasure, and praise.

Weigh justly, throw good and bad in
The scales, will the balance veer
With the joys or the sorrows had in
The sum of a life's career?
In the end, spite of dreams that sadden
The sad, or the sanguine madden,
There is nothing to grieve or gladden,
There is nothing to hope or fear.

'Thou hast gone astray,' quoth the preacher,
'In the gall of thy bitterness,'
Thou hast taught me in vain, oh, teacher!
I neither blame thee nor bless;
If bitter is sure and sweet sure,
These vanish with form and feature—
Can the creature fathom the creature
Whose Creator is fathomless?

Is this dry land sure? Is the sea sure?
Is there aught that shall long remain,
Pain, or peril, or pleasure,
Pleasure, or peril, or pain?
Shall we labour or take our leisure,
And who shall inherit treasure,
If the measure with which we measure
Is meted to us again?

I am slow in learning, and swift in
Forgetting, and I have grown
So weary with long sand sifting;
T'wards the mist where the breakers moan
The rudderless bark is drifting,
Through the shoals and the quicksands shifting—
In the end shall the night-rack lifting,
Discover the shores unknown?

HIPPODROMANIA; OR, WHIFFS FROM THE PIPE[1]

IN FIVE PARTS

Part I

VISIONS IN THE SMOKE

Rest, and be thankful! On the verge
  Of the tall cliff rugged and grey,
But whose granite base the breakers surge,
  And shiver their frothy spray,
Outstretched, I gaze on the eddying wreath
  That gathers and flits away,
With the surf beneath, and between my teeth
  The stem of the 'ancient clay'.

With the anodyne cloud on my listless eyes,
  With its spell on my dreamy brain,
As I watch the circling vapours rise
From the brown bowl up to the sullen skies.
  My vision becomes more plain,
Till a dim kaleidoscope succeeds
  Through the smoke-rack drifting and veering,
Like ghostly riders on phantom steeds
  To a shadowy goal careering.

In their own generation the wise may sneer,
  They hold our sports in derision;
Perchance to sophist, or sage, or seer,
  Were allotted a graver vision.

[1] Note 10, p. 376.

Yet if man, of all the Creator plann'd,
His noblest work is reckoned,
Of the works of His hand, by sea or by land,
The horse may at least rank second.

Did they quail, those steeds of the squadrons light,
Did they flinch from the battle's roar,
When they burst on the guns of the Muscovite,
By the echoing Black Sea shore ?
On ! on ! to the cannon's mouth they stride,
With never a swerve nor a shy,
Oh ! the minutes of yonder maddening ride,
Long years of pleasure outvie !

No slave, but a comrade staunch, in this,
Is the horse, for he takes his share,
Not in peril alone, but in feverish bliss,
And in longing to do and dare.
Where bullets whistle, and round shot whiz,
Hoofs trample, and blades flash bare,
God send me an ending as fair as his
Who died in his stirrups there !

The wind has slumbered throughout the day,
Now a fitful gust springs over the bay,
My wandering thoughts no longer stray,
I'll fix my overcoat buttons ;
Secure my old hat as best I may
(And a shocking bad one it is, by the way),
Blow a denser cloud from my stunted clay,
And then, friend *Bell*, as the Frenchmen say,
We'll 'go back again to our muttons'.

There 's a lull in the tumult on yonder hill,
And the clamour has grown less loud,
Though the Babel of tongues is never still,
With the presence of such a crowd.
The bell has rung. With their riders up
At the starting post they muster,
The racers stripp'd for the 'Melbourne Cup',
All gloss and polish and lustre;
And the course is seen, with its emerald sheen,
By the bright spring-tide renew'd,
Like a ribbon of green, stretched out between
The ranks of the multitude.

The flag is lowered. 'They're off!' 'They come!'
The squadron is sweeping on;
A sway in the crowd—a murmuring hum!
'They're here!' 'They're past!' 'They're gone!'
They came with the rush of the southern surf,
On the bar of the storm-girt bay;
And like muffled drums on the sounding turf
Their hoof-strokes echo away.

The rose and black draws clear of the ruck,
And the murmur swells to a roar,
As the brave old colours that never were struck,
Are seen with the lead once more.
Though the feathery ferns and grasses wave
O'er the sod where Lantern sleeps,
Though the turf is green on Fisherman's grave,
The stable its prestige keeps.

Six lengths in front she scours along,
  She 's bringing the field to trouble ;
She 's tailing them off, she 's running strong,
  She shakes her head and pulls double.
Now Minstrel falters and Exile flags,
  The Barb finds the pace too hot,
And Toryboy loiters, and Playboy lags,
  And the *bolt* of Ben Bolt is shot.

That she never may be caught this day
  Is the worst that the public wish her.
She won't be caught ; she comes right away ;
  Hurrah for Seagull and Fisher ;
See, Strop falls back, though his reins are slack,
  Sultana begins to tire,
And the top-weight tells on the Sydney crack,
  And the pace on 'the Gippsland flyer'.

The rowels, as round the turn they sweep,
  Just graze Tim Whiffler's flanks ;
Like the hunted deer that flies through the sheep,
  He strides through the beaten ranks
Daughter of Omen, prove your birth,
  The colt will take lots of choking ;
The hot breath steams at your saddle girth,
  From his scarlet nostril smoking.

The shouts of the Ring for a space subside,
  And slackens the bookmaker's roar ;
Now, Davis, rally ; now, Carter, ride,
  As man never rode before.

When Sparrowhawk's backers cease to cheer,
When Yattendon's friends are dumb,
When hushed is the clamour for Volunteer—
Alone in the race they come!

They're neck and neck; they're head and head;
They're stroke for stroke in the running;
The whalebone whistles, the steel is red,
No shirking as yet nor shunning.
One effort, Seagull, the blood you boast
Should struggle when nerves are strained;—
With a rush on the post, by a neck at the most,
The verdict for Tim is gained.

Tim Whiffler wins. Is blood alone
The *sine qua non* for a flyer?
The breed of his dam is a myth unknown,
And we've doubts respecting his sire.
Yet few (if any) those proud names are,
On the pages of peerage or stud,
In whose 'scutcheon lurks no sinister bar,
No taint of the base black blood.

Aye, Shorthouse, laugh—laugh loud and long,
For pedigree you're a sticker;
You may be right, I may be wrong,
Wiseacres both! Let's liquor.
Our common descent we may each recall
To a lady of old caught tripping,
The fair one in fig leaves, who d——d us all
For a bite at a golden pippin.

When first on this rocky ledge I lay,
There was scarce a ripple in yonder bay,
The air was serenely still;
Each column that sailed from my swarthy clay
Hung loitering long ere it passed away,
Though the skies wore a tinge of leaden grey,
And the atmosphere was chill.
But the red sun sank to his evening shroud,
Where the western billows are roll'd
Behind a curtain of sable cloud,
With a fringe of scarlet and gold;
There 's a misty glare in the yellow moon,
And the drift is scudding fast,
There'll be storm, and rattle, and tempest soon,
When the heavens are overcast.
The neutral tint of the sullen sea
Is fleck'd with the snowy foam,
And the distant gale sighs drearilie,
As the wanderer sighs for his home.
The white sea-horses toss their manes
On the bar of the southern reef,
And the breakers moan, and—by Jove, it rains
(I thought I should come to grief);
Though it can't well damage my shabby hat,
Though my coat looks best when it 's damp;
Since the shaking I got (no matter where at),
I've a mortal dread of the cramp.
My matches are wet, my pipe 's put out,
And the wind blows colder and stronger;
I'll be stiff, and sore, and sorry, no doubt,
If I lie here any longer.

Part II

THE FIELDS OF COLERAINE[1]

On the fields of Col'raine there'll be labour in vain
Before the Great Western is ended,
The nags will have toil'd, and the silks will be soil'd.
And the rails will require to be mended.

For the gullies are deep, and the uplands are steep,
And mud will of purls be the token,
And the tough stringy-bark, that invites us to lark,
With impunity may not be broken.

Though Ballarat 's fast, and they say he can last,
And that may be granted hereafter,
Yet the judge's decision to the Border division
Will bring neither shouting nor laughter.

And Blueskin, I've heard that he goes like a bird,
And I'm told that to back him would pay me ;
He 's a good bit of stuff, but not quite good enough,
' Non licuit credere famae.'

Alfred ought to be there, we all of us swear
By the blood of King Alfred, his sire ;
He 's not the real jam, by the blood of his dam,
So I shan't put him down as a flyer.

Now, Hynam, my boy, I wish you great joy,
I know that when fresh you can jump, sir ;
But you'll scarce be in clover when you're ridden all over,
And punish'd from shoulder to rump, sir.

[1] Note 11 A, p. 377.

Archer goes like a shot, they can put on their pot,
And boil it to cover expenses ;
Their pot will boil over, the run of his Dover
He'll never earn over big fences.

There 's a horse in the race, with a blaze on his face,
And we know he can gallop a docker !
He 's proved himself stout, of his speed there 's no doubt,
And his jumping 's according to Cocker.

When Hynam 's outstripp'd, and when Alfred is whipp'd,
To keep him in sight of the leaders,
While Blueskin runs true, but his backers look blue,
For his rider 's at work with the bleeders ;

When his carcase of beef brings 'the bullock' to grief,
And the rush of the tartan is ended ;
When Archer 's in trouble—who 's that pulling double,
And taking his leaps unextended ?

He wins all the way, and the rest—sweet, they say,
Is the smell of the newly-turn'd plough, friend,
But you smell it too close when it stops eyes and nose,
And you can't tell your horse from your cow, friend.

Part III

CREDAT JUDAEUS APELLA[1]

Dear Bell,—I enclose what you ask in a letter,
A short rhyme at random, no more and no less,
And you may insert it for want of a better,
Or leave it, it doesn't much matter, I guess ;

[1] Note 11 B, p. 377.

And as for a tip, why, there isn't much in it,
I may hit the right nail, but first, I declare,
I haven't a notion what 's going to win it
(The Champion, I mean), and what 's more, I don't care.
Imprimis, there 's Cowra—few nags can go quicker
Than she can—and Smith takes his oath she can fly;
While Brown, Jones, and Robinson swear she 's a sticker,
But '*credat Judaeus Apella*', say I.

There's old Volunteer, I'd be sorry to sneer
At his chance; he'll be there, if he goes at the rate
He went at last year, when a customer queer,
Johnny Higgerson, fancied him lock'd in the straight.
I've heard that the old horse has never been fitter,
I've heard all performances past he'll outvie;
He may gallop a docker, and finish a splitter,
But '*credat Judaeus Apella*', say I.

I know what they say, sir, 'The Hook' he can stay, sir,
And stick to his work like a sleuth-hound or beagle;
He stays 'with a *hook*', and he sticks in the clay, sir,
I'd rather, for choice, pop my money on Seagull;
I'm told that the Sydney division will rue, sir,
Their rashness in front of the stand when they spy,
With a clear lead, the white jacket spotted with blue, sir,
But '*credat Judaeus Apella*', say I.

There 's The Barb—you may talk of your flyers and stayers,
All bosh—when he strips you can see his eye range
Round his rivals, with much the same look as Tom Sayers
Once wore when he faced the big novice, Bill Bainge.

Like Stow, at our hustings, confronting the hisses
Of roughs, with his queer Mephistopheles' smile;
Like Baker, or Baker's more wonderful *Mrs.*,
The terror of blacks at the source of the Nile;
Like Triton 'mid minnows; like hawk among chickens;
Like—anything better than everything else;
He stands at the post. Now they're off! the plot thickens!
Quoth Stanley to Davis, 'How is your pulse?'
He skims o'er the smooth turf, he scuds through the mire,
He waits with them, passes them, bids them good-bye!
Two miles and three-quarters, cries Filgate, 'He'll tire.'
Oh! '*credat Judaeus Apella*,' say I.

Lest my tale should come true, let me give you fair warning,
You may 'shout' some cheroots, if you like, no champagne
For this child—'Oh! think of my head in the morning,'
Old chap, you don't get me on that lay again.
The last time those games I look'd likely to try on,
Says Bradshawe, 'You'll feel very sheepish and shy
When you are haul'd up and caution'd by D—g—y and L—n,'
Oh! '*credat Judaeus Apella*,' say I.

This writing bad verses is very fatiguing,
The brain and the liver against it combine,
And nerves with digestion in concert are leaguing,
To punish excess in the pen and ink line;

Already I feel just as if I'd been rowing
Hard all—on a supper of onions and tripe
(A thing I abhor), but my steam I've done blowing,
I am, my dear *Bell*, yours truly, 'The Pipe.'

P.S.—Tell J. P., if he fancies a good 'un,
That old chestnut pony of mine is for sale.

N.B.—His fore legs are uncommonly wooden,
I fancy the near one's beginning to fail,
And why shouldn't I do as W—n does oft,
And swear that a cripple is sound—on the Bible—
Hold hard! though the man I allude to is soft,
He's game to go in for an action of libel.

Part IV

BANKER'S DREAM[1]

Of chases and courses dogs dream, so do horses—
Last night I was dozing and dreaming,
The crowd and the bustle were there, and the rustle
Of the silk in the autumn sky gleaming.

The stand throng'd with faces, the broadcloth and laces,
The booths, and the tents, and the cars,
The bookmakers' jargon, for odds making bargain,
The nasty stale smell of cigars.

We formed into line, 'neath the merry sunshine,
Near the logs at the end of the railing;
'Are you ready, boys? Go!' cried the starter, and low
Sank the flag, and away we went sailing.

[1] Note 11 C, p. 377.

In the van of the battle we heard the stones rattle,
Some slogging was done, but no slaughter,
A shout from the stand, and the whole of our band
Skimm'd merrily over the water.

Two fences we clear'd, and the roadway we near'd,
When three of our troop came to trouble ;
Like a bird on the wing, or a stone from a sling,
Flew Cadger, first over the double.

And Western was there, head and tail in the air,
And Pondon was there, too—what noodle
Could so name a horse ? I should feel some remorse
If I gave such a name to a poodle.

In and out of the lane, to the racecourse again,
Craig's pony was first, I was third,
And Ingleside lit in my tracks, with the bit
In his teeth, and came up ' like a bird '

In the van of the battle we heard the rails rattle,
Says he, ' Though I don't care for shunning
My share of the raps, I shall look out for gaps,
When the light weight 's away with the running.'

At the fence just ahead, the outsider still led,
The chestnut play'd follow my leader ;
Oh ! the devil a gap, he went into it slap,
And he and his jock took a header.

Says Ingleside, ' Mate, should the pony go straight,
You've no time to stop or turn restive ; '
Says I, ' Who means to stop ? I shall go till I drop ;
Says he, ' Go it, old cuss, gay and festive.'

The fence stiff and tall, just beyond the log wall,
We cross'd, and the walls, and the water,—
I took off too near, a small made fence to clear,
And just touch'd the grass with my snorter.

At the next post and rail up went Western's bang tail,
And down (by the very same token)
To earth went his nose, for the panel he chose
Stood firm and refused to be broken.

I dreamt someone said that the bay would have made
The race safe if he'd *stood* a while longer ;
If he had,—but, like if, there the panel stands stiff—
He stood, but the panel stood stronger.

In and out of the road, with a clear lead still show'd
The violet fluted with amber ;
Says Johnson, ' Old man, catch him now if you can,
'Tis the second time round, you'll remember.'

At the road once again, pulling hard on the rein,
Craig's pony popp'd in and popp'd out ;
I followed like smoke, and the pace was no joke,
For his friends were beginning to shout.

And Ingleside came to my side, strong and game,
And once he appear'd to outstrip me,
But I felt the steel gore, and I shot to the fore,
Only Cadger seem'd likely to whip me.

In the van of the battle I heard the logs rattle,
His stroke never seem'd to diminish,
And thrice I drew near him, and thrice he drew clear,
For the weight served him well at the finish.

Ha ! Cadger goes down, see, he stands on his crown—
Those rails take a power of clouting—
A long sliding blunder—he's up—well, I wonder
If now it's all over but shouting.

All loosely he's striding, the amateur 's riding
All loosely, some reverie lock'd in
Of a ' vision in smoke ', or a ' wayfaring bloke ',
His poetical rubbish concocting.

Now comes from afar the faint cry, ' Here they are,'
' The violet winning with ease,'
' Fred goes up like a shot,' ' Does he catch him or not ? '
Level money, I'll take the cerise.

To his haunches I spring, and my muzzle I bring
To his flank, to his girth, to his shoulder ;
Through the shouting and yelling I hear my name swelling,
The hearts of my backers grow bolder.

Neck and neck ! head and head ! staring eye ! nostrils spread !
Girth and stifle laid close to the ground !
Stride for stride ! stroke for stroke ! through one hurdle we've broke !
On the splinters we've lit with one bound.

And ' Banker for choice ' is the cry, and one voice
Screams, ' Six to four once upon Banker ; '
' Banker wins,' ' Banker's beat,' ' Cadger wins,' ' A dead heat '—
' Ah ! there goes Fred's whalebone a flanker.'

Springs the whip with a crack! nine stone ten on his back,
Fit and light he can race like the devil;
I draw past him—'tis vain; he draws past me again,
Springs the whip! and again we are level.

Steel and cord do their worst, now my head struggles first!
That tug my last spurt has expended—
Nose to nose! lip to lip! from the sound of the whip
He strains to the utmost extended.

How they swim through the air, as we roll to the chair,
Stand, faces, and railings flit past;
Now I spring . . .
from my lair, with a snort and a stare,
Rous'd by Fred with my supper at last.

Part V

EX FUMO DARE LUCEM[1]

['TWIXT THE CUP AND THE LIP]

PROLOGUE

Calm and clear! the bright day is declining,
The crystal expanse of the bay,
Like a shield of pure metal, lies shining
'Twixt headlands of purple and grey,
While the little waves leap in the sunset,
And strike with a miniature shock,
In sportive and infantine onset,
The base of the iron-stone rock.

[1] Note 11 D, p. 377.

Calm and clear! the sea-breezes are laden
With a fragrance, a freshness, a power,
With a song like the song of a maiden,
With a scent like the scent of a flower;
And a whisper, half-weird, half-prophetic,
Comes home with the sigh of the surf;—
But I pause, for your fancies poetic
Never rise from the level of 'Turf'.

Fellow-bungler of mine, fellow-sinner,
In public performances past,
In trials whence touts take their winner,
In rumours that circulate fast,
In strains from Prunella or Priam,
Staying stayers, or goers that go,
You're much better posted than I am,
'Tis little I care, less I know.

Alas! neither poet nor prophet
Am I, though a jingler of rhymes—
'Tis a hobby of mine, and I'm off it
At times, and I'm on it at times;
And whether I'm off it or on it,
Your readers my counsels will shun,
Since I scarce know Van Tromp from Blue Bonnet,
Though I might know Cigar from The Nun.

With 'visions' you ought to be sated
And sicken'd by this time; I swear
That mine are all myths self-created,
Air visions that vanish in air;

If I had some loose coins I might chuck one,
To settle this question and say,
'Here goes! this is tails for the black one,
And heads for my fav'rite, the bay.'

And must I rob Paul to pay Peter
Or Peter defraud to pay Paul?
My rhymes, are they stale? if my metre
Is varied, one chime rings through all;
One chime—though I sing more or sing less,
I have but one string to my lute,
And it might have been better if, stringless
And songless, the same had been mute.

Yet not as a seer of visions,
Nor yet as a dreamer of dreams,
I send you these partial decisions
On hackney'd, impoverish'd themes;
But with song out of tune, sung to pass time,
Flung heedless to friends or to foes,
Where the false notes that ring for the last time
May blend with some real ones, who knows?

The Race

On the hill they are crowding together,
In the stand they are crushing for room,
Like midge-flies they swarm on the heather,
They gather like bees on the broom;
They flutter like moths round a candle—
Stale similes, granted, what then?
I've got a stale subject to handle,
A very stale stump of a pen.

Hark! the shuffle of feet that are many,
Of voices the many-tongued clang—
'Has he had a bad night?' 'Has he any
Friends left?'—How I hate your turf slang;
'Tis stale to begin with, not witty,
But dull and inclined to be coarse,
But bad men can't use (more's the pity)
Good words when they slate a good horse.

Heu! heu! quantus equis (that's Latin
For 'bellows to mend' with the weeds),
They're off! lights and shades! silk and satin!
A rainbow of riders and steeds!
And one shows in front, and another
Goes up and is seen in his place,
Sic transit (more Latin)—Oh! bother,
Let's get to the end of the race.

. . . . . .

See, they come round the last turn careering,
Already Tait's colours are struck,
And the green in the vanguard is steering,
And the red's in the rear of the ruck!
Are the stripes in the shade doom'd to lie long?
Do the blue stars on white skies wax dim?
Is it Tamworth or Smuggler? 'Tis Bylong
That wins—either Bylong or Tim.

As the shell through the breach that is riven
And sapp'd by the springing of mines,
As the bolt from the thunder-cloud driven,
That levels the larches and pines

Through yon mass parti-colour'd that dashes
  Goal-turn'd, clad in many-hued garb,
From rear to van, surges and flashes
  The yellow and black of The Barb.

Past The Fly, falling back on the right, and
  The Gull, giving way on the left,
Past Tamworth, who feels the whip smite, and
  Whose sides by the rowels are cleft;
Where Tim and the chestnut together
  Still bear of the battle the brunt,
As if eight stone twelve were a feather,
  He comes with a rush to the front.

Tim Whiffler may yet prove a Tartar,
  And Bylong's the horse that can stay,
But Kean is in trouble—and Carter
  Is hard on the satin-skinn'd bay;
And The Barb comes away unextended,
  Hard held, like a second Eclipse,
While behind, the hoof-thunder is blended
  With the whistling and crackling of whips.

Epilogue

He wins; yes, he wins upon paper,
  He hasn't yet won upon turf,
And these rhymes are but moonshine and vapour,
  Air-bubbles and spume from the surf.
So be it, at least they are given
  Free, gratis, for just what they're worth,
And (whatever there may be in heaven)
  There's little worth much upon earth.

When, with satellites round them, the centre
Of all eyes, hard press'd by the crowd,
The pair, horse and rider, re-enter
The gate, 'mid a shout long and loud,
You may feel, as you might feel, just landed
Full length on the grass from the clip
Of a vicious cross-counter, right-handed,
Or upper-cut whizzing from hip.

And that's not so bad if you're pick'd up
Discreetly, and carefully nursed;
Loose teeth by the sponge are soon lick'd up,
And next time you *may* get home first.
Still I'm not sure you'd like it exactly
(Such tastes as a rule are acquired),
And you'll find in a nutshell this fact lie,
Bruised optics are not much admired.

Do I bore you with vulgar allusions?
Forgive me, I speak as I feel,
I've ponder'd and made my conclusions—
As the mill grinds the corn to the meal;
So man striving boldly but blindly,
Ground piecemeal in Destiny's mill,
At his best, taking punishment kindly,
Is only a chopping-block still.

Are we wise? Our abstruse calculations
Are based on experience long;
Are we sanguine? Our high expectations
Are founded on hope that is strong;

Thus we build an air-castle that crumbles
And drifts, till no traces remain,
And the fool builds again while he grumbles,
And the wise one laughs, building again.

'How came they to pass, these rash blunders,
These false steps so hard to defend?'
Our friend puts the question and wonders,
We laugh and reply, 'Ah! my friend,
Could you trace the first stride falsely taken,
The distance misjudged, where or how,
When you pick'd yourself up, stunn'd and shaken,
At the fence 'twixt the turf and the plough?'

In the jar of the panel rebounding!
In the crash of the splintering wood!
In the ears to the earth shock resounding
In the eyes flashing fire and blood!
In the quarters above you revolving!
In the sods underneath heaving high!
There was little to aid you in solving
Such questions—the how or the why.

And destiny, steadfast in trifles,
Is steadfast for better or worse
In great things, it crushes and stifles,
And swallows the hopes that we nurse.
Men wiser than we are may wonder,
When the future they cling to so fast,
To the roll of that destiny's thunder,
Goes down with the wrecks of the past.

. . . . . .

The past! the dead past that has swallow'd
All the honey of life and the milk,
Brighter dreams than mere pastimes we've follow'd,
Better things than our scarlet or silk;
Aye, and worse things—that past is it really
Dead to us who again and again
Feel sharply, hear plainly, see clearly,
Past days with their joy and their pain?

Like corpses embalm'd and unburied
They lie, and in spite of our will,
Our souls on the wings of thought carried,
Revisit their sepulchres still;
Down the channels of mystery gliding,
They conjure strange tales, rarely read,
Of the priests of dead Pharaohs presiding
At mystical feasts of the dead.

Weird pictures arise, quaint devices,
Rude emblems, baked funeral meats,
Strong incense, rare wines, and rich spices,
The ashes, the shrouds, and the sheets;
Does our thraldom fall short of completeness
For the magic of a charnel-house charm,
And the flavour of a poisonous sweetness,
And the odour of a poisonous balm?

And the links of the past—but, no matter,
For I'm getting beyond you, I guess,
And you'll call me 'as mad as a hatter'
If my thoughts I too freely express;

I subjoin a quotation, pray learn it,
And with the aid of your lexicon tell us
The meaning thereof—'*Res discernit*
Sapiens, quas confundit asellus.'

Already green hillocks are swelling,
And combing white locks on the bar,
Where a dull, droning murmur is telling
Of winds that have gather'd afar;
Thus we know not the day, nor the morrow,
Nor yet what the night may bring forth,
Nor the storm, nor the sleep, nor the sorrow,
Nor the strife, nor the rest, nor the wrath.

Yet the skies are still tranquil and starlit,
The sun 'twixt the wave and the west
Dies in purple, and crimson, and scarlet,
And gold; let us hope for the best,
Since again from the earth his effulgence
The darkness and damp-dews shall wipe,
Kind reader, extend your indulgence
To this the last lay of 'The Pipe'.

THE ROLL OF THE KETTLEDRUM

OR, THE

LAY OF THE LAST CHARGER

'You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet,
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?
Of two such lessons, why forget
The nobler and the manlier one?'—*Byron.*

One line of swart profiles, and bearded lips dressing,
One ridge of bright helmets, one crest of fair plumes,
One streak of blue sword-blades all bared for the fleshing,
One row of red nostrils that scent battle-fumes.

Forward! the trumpets were sounding the charge,
The roll of the kettledrum rapidly ran,
That music, like wild-fire spreading at large,
Madden'd the war-horse as well as the man.

Forward! still forward! we thunder'd along,
Steadily yet, for our strength we were nursing;
Tall Ewart, our sergeant, was humming a song,
Lance-corporal Black Will was blaspheming and cursing.

Open'd their volley of guns on our right,
Puffs of grey smoke, veiling gleams of red flame,
Curling to leeward, were seen on the height,
Where the batteries were posted, as onward we came.

Spreading before us their cavalry lay,
Squadron on squadron, troop upon troop;
We were so few, and so many were they—
Eagles wait calmly the sparrow-hawk's stoop.

Forward ! still forward ! steed answering steed
Cheerily neigh'd, while the foam flakes were toss'd
From bridle to bridle—the top of our speed
Was gain'd, but the pride of our order was lost.

One was there, leading by nearly a rood,
Though we were racing he kept to the fore,
Still as a rock in his stirrups he stood,
High in the sunlight his sabre he bore.

Suddenly tottering, backwards he crash'd,
Loudly his helm right in front of us rung ;
Iron hoofs thunder'd, and naked steel flash'd
Over him—youngest, where many were young.

Now we were close to them, every horse striding
Madly ;—St. Luce pass'd with never a groan ;—
Sadly my master look'd round—he was riding
On the boy's right, with a line of his own.

Thrusting his hand in his breast or breast pocket,
While from his wrist the sword swung by a chain,
Swiftly he drew out some trinket or locket,
Kiss'd it (I think) and replaced it again.

Burst, while his fingers reclosed on the haft,
Jarring concussion and earth shaking din,
Horse 'counter'd horse, and I reel'd, but he laugh'd,
Down went his man, cloven clean to the chin !

Wedged in the midst of that struggling mass,
After the first shock, where each his foe singled,
Little was seen save a dazzle, like glass
In the sun, with grey smoke and black dust intermingled.

Here and there redden'd a pistol shot, flashing
Through the red sparkle of steel upon steel!
Redder the spark seem'd, and louder the clashing,
Struck from the helm by the iron-shod heel!

Over fallen riders, like wither'd leaves strewing
Uplands in autumn, we sunder'd their ranks;
Steeds rearing and plunging, men hacking and hewing,
Fierce grinding of sword-blades, sharp goading of flanks.

Short was the crisis of conflict soon over,
Being too good (I suppose) to last long;
Through them we cut, as the scythe cuts the clover,
Batter'd and stain'd we emerged from their throng.

Some of our saddles were emptied, of course;
To heaven (or elsewhere) Black Will had been carried!
Ned Sullivan mounted Will's riderless horse,
His mare being hurt, while ten seconds we tarried.

And then we re-formed, and went at them once more,
And ere they had rightly closed up the old track,
We broke through the lane we had open'd before,
And as we went forward e'en so we came back.

Our numbers were few, and our loss far from small,
They could fight, and, besides, they were twenty to one;
We were clear of them all when we heard the recall,
And thus we returned, but my tale is not done.

For the hand of my rider felt strange on my bit,
He breathed once or twice like one partially choked,
And sway'd in his seat, then I knew he was hit ;—
He must have bled fast, for my withers were soak'd,

And scarcely an inch of my housing was dry ;
I slacken'd my speed, yet I never quite stopp'd,
Ere he patted my neck, said, ' Old fellow, good-bye ! '
And dropp'd off me gently, and lay where he dropp'd !

Ah, me ! after all, they may call us dumb creatures—
I tried hard to neigh, but the sobs took my breath,
Yet I guess'd, gazing down at those still, quiet features,
He was never more happy in life than in death.

. . . . . .

Two years back, at Aldershot, Elrington mentioned
My name to our colonel one field-day. He said,
' " Count," " Steeltrap," and " Challenger " ought to be
pension'd ; '
' Count ' died the same week, and now ' Steeltrap ' is
dead.

That morning our colonel was riding ' Theresa ',
The filly by ' Teddington ' out of ' Mistake ' ;
His girls, pretty Alice and fair-haired Louisa,
Were there on the ponies he purchased from Blake.

I remember he pointed me out to his daughters,
Said he, ' In this troop I may fairly take pride,
But I've none left like him in my officers' quarters,
Whose life-blood the mane of old " Challenger " dyed.'

Where are they? the war-steeds who shared in our glory,
The 'Lanercost' colt, and the 'Acrobat' mare,
And the Irish division, 'Kate Kearney' and 'Rory',
And rushing 'Roscommon', and eager 'Kildare',

And 'Freeny', a favourite once with my master,
And 'Warlock', a sluggard, but honest and true,
And 'Tancred', as honest as 'Warlock', but faster,
And 'Blacklock', and 'Birdlime', and 'Molly Carew'?—

All vanish'd, what wonder! twelve summers have pass'd
Since then, and my comrade lies buried this day,—
Old 'Steeltrap', the kicker,—and now I'm the last
Of the chargers who shared in that glorious fray.

. . . . . .

Come, 'Harlequin,' keep your nose out of my manger,
You'll get your allowance, my boy, and no more;
Snort! 'Silvertail,' snort! when you've seen as much danger
As I have, you won't mind the rats in the straw.

. . . . . .

Our gallant old colonel came limping and halting,
The day before yesterday, into my stall;
Oh! light to the saddle I've once seen him vaulting,
In full marching order, steel broadsword and all.

And now his left leg than his right is made shorter
Three inches, he stoops, and his chest is unsound;
He spoke to me gently, and patted my quarter,
I laid my ears back and look'd playfully round.

For that word kindly meant, that caress kindly given,
I thank'd him, though dumb, but my cheerfulness fled;
More sadness I drew from the face of the living
Than years back I did from the face of the dead.

For the dead face, upturn'd, tranquil, joyous, and fearless,
Look'd straight from green sod to blue fathomless sky
With a smile; but the living face, gloomy and tearless,
And haggard and harass'd, look'd down with a sigh.

Did he think on the first time he kiss'd Lady Mary?
On the morning he wing'd Horace Greville the beau?
On the winner he steer'd in the grand militáry?
On the charge that he headed twelve long years ago?

Did he think on each fresh year, of fresh grief the herald?
On lids that are sunken, and locks that are grey?
On Alice, who bolted with Brian Fitzgerald?
On Rupert, his first-born, dishonour'd by 'play'?

On Louey, his darling, who sleeps 'neath the cypress,
That shades her and one whose last breath gave her life?
I saw those strong fingers hard over each eye press—
Oh! the dead rest in peace when the quick toil in strife!

. . . . . .

Scoff, man! egotistical, proud, unobservant,
Since I with man's grief dare to sympathize thus;
Why scoff?—fellow-creature I am, fellow-servant
Of God can man fathom God's dealings with us?

The wide gulf that parts us may yet be no wider
Than that which parts you from some being more blest;
And there may be more links 'twixt the horse and his rider
Than ever your shallow philosophy guess'd.

You are proud of your power, and vain of your courage,
And your blood, Anglo-Saxon, or Norman, or Celt;
Though your gifts you extol, and our gifts you disparage,
Your perils, your pleasures, your sorrows we've felt.

We, too, sprung from mares of the prophet of Mecca,
And nursed on the pride that was born with the milk,
And filtered through 'Crucifix,' 'Beeswing,' 'Rebecca,'
We love sheen of scarlet and shimmer of silk.

We, too, sprung from loins of the Ishmaelite stallions,
We glory in daring that dies or prevails;
From 'counter of squadrons, and crash of battalions,
To rending of blackthorns, and rattle of rails.

In all strife where courage is tested, and power,
From the meet on the hill-side, the horn-blast, the find,
The burst, the long gallop that seems to devour
The champaign, all obstacles flinging behind,

To the cheer and the clarion, the war-music blended
With war-cry, the furious dash at the foe,
The terrible shock, the recoil, and the splendid
Bare sword, flashing blue rising red from the blow.

I've borne *one* through perils where many have seen us,
No tyrant, a kind friend, a patient instructor,
And I've felt some strange element flashing between us,
Till the saddle seem'd turn'd to a lightning conductor.

Did he see ? could he feel through the faintness, the numbness,
While linger'd the spirit half-loosed from the clay,
Dumb eyes seeking his in their piteous dumbness,
Dumb quivering nostrils, too stricken to neigh ?

And what then ? the colours reversed, the drums muffled,
The black nodding plumes, the dead march, and the pall,
The stern faces, soldier-like, silent, unruffled,
The slow sacred music that floats over all !

Cross carbine and boar-spear, hang bugle and banner,
Spur, sabre, and snaffle, and helm—Is it well ?
Vain 'scutcheon, false trophies of Mars and Diana,—
Can the dead laurel sprout with the live *immortelle ?*

It may be,—we follow, and though we inherit
Our strength for a season, our pride for a span,
Say ! vanity are they ? vexation of spirit ?
Not so, since they serve for a time horse and man.

They serve for a time, and they make life worth living,
In spite of life's troubles—'tis vain to despond ;
Oh, man ! *we* at least, *we* enjoy, with thanksgiving,
God's gifts on this earth, though we look not beyond.

You sin, and *you* suffer, and we, too, find sorrow,
Perchance through *your* sin—yet it soon will be o'er;
We labour to-day, and we slumber to-morrow,
Strong horse and bold rider!—and *who knoweth more?*

. . . . .

In our barrack-square shouted Drill-sergeant M'Cluskie,
The roll of the kettledrum rapidly ran,
The colonel wheel'd short, speaking once, dry and husky,
'Would to God I had died with your master, old man!'

End of Sea Spray and Smoke Drift.

BUSH BALLADS AND GALLOPING RHYMES

A DEDICATION

TO THE AUTHOR OF 'HOLMBY HOUSE'

They are rhymes rudely strung with intent less
Of sound than of words,
In lands where bright blossoms are scentless,
And songless bright birds;
Where, with fire and fierce drought on her tresses,
Insatiable Summer oppresses
Sere woodlands and sad wildernesses,
And faint flocks and herds.

Where in dreariest days, when all dews end,
And all winds are warm,
Wild Winter's large flood-gates are loosen'd,
And floods, freed by storm,
From broken up fountain heads, dash on
Dry deserts with long pent up passion—
Here rhyme was first framed without fashion,
Song shaped without form.

Whence gather'd?—The locust's glad chirrup
May furnish a stave;
The ring of a rowel and stirrup,
The wash of a wave.

The chaunt of the marsh frog in rushes,
That chimes through the pauses and hushes
Of nightfall, the torrent that gushes,
The tempests that rave.

In the deep'ning of dawn, when it dapples
The dusk of the sky,
With streaks like the redd'ning of apples,
The ripening of rye,
To eastward, when cluster by cluster,
Dim stars and dull planets that muster,
Wax wan in a world of white lustre
That spreads far and high;

In the gathering of night gloom o'erhead, in
The still silent change,
All fire-flush'd when forest trees redden
On slopes of the range.
When the gnarl'd, knotted trunks Eucalyptian
Seem carved, like weird columns Egyptian,
With curious device—quaint inscription,
And hieroglyph strange.

In the Spring, when the wattle gold trembles
'Twixt shadow and shine,
When each dew-laden air draught resembles
A long draught of wine;
When the sky-line's blue burnish'd resistance
Makes deeper the dreamiest distance,
Some song in all hearts hath existence,—
Such songs have been mine.

They came in all guises, some vivid
To clasp and to keep;
Some sudden and swift as the livid
Blue thunder-flame's leap.
This swept through the first breath of clover
With memories renew'd to the rover—
That flash'd while the black horse turn'd over
Before the long sleep.

To you (having cunning to colour
A page with your pen,
That through dull days, and nights even duller,
Long years ago ten,
Fair pictures in fever afforded)—
I send these rude staves, roughly worded
By one in whose brain stands recorded
As clear now as then,

'The great rush of grey "Northern water",
The green ridge of bank,
The "sorrel" with curved sweep of quarter
Curl'd close to clean flank,
The Royalist saddlefast squarely,
And, where the bright uplands stretch fairly,
Behind, beyond pistol-shot barely,
The Roundheaded rank.

'A long launch, with clinging of muscles,
And clenching of teeth!
The loose doublet ripples and rustles!
The swirl shoots beneath!'

Enough. In return for your garland—
In lieu of the flowers from your far land—
Take wild growth of dreamland or starland,
Take weeds for your wreath.

Yet rhyme had not fail'd me for reason,
Nor reason for rhyme,
Sweet Song! had I sought you in season,
And found you in time.
You beckon in your bright beauty yonder,
And I, waxing fainter, yet fonder,
Now weary too soon when I wander—
Nów fall when I climb.

It matters but little in the long run,
The weak have some right—
Some share in the race that the strong run,
The fight the strong fight.
If words that are worthless go westward,
Yet the worst word shall be as the best word,
In the day when all riot sweeps restward,
In darkness or light.

THE SICK STOCKRIDER[1]

Hold hard, Ned! Lift me down once more, and lay me
in the shade.
Old man, you've had your work cut out to guide
Both horses, and to hold me in the saddle when I sway'd,
All through the hot, slow, sleepy, silent ride.

[1] Note 12, p. 377.

The dawn at 'Moorabinda' was a mist rack dull and dense,
The sunrise was a sullen, sluggish lamp;
I was dozing in the gateway at Arbuthnot's bound'ry fence,
I was dreaming on the Limestone cattle camp.
We crossed the creek at Carricksford, and sharply through the haze,
And suddenly the sun shot flaming forth;
To southward lay 'Katâwa,' with the sandpeaks all ablaze,
And the flush'd fields of Glen Lomond lay to north.
Now westward winds the bridle path that leads to Lindisfarm,
And yonder looms the double-headed Bluff;
From the far side of the first hill, when the skies are clear and calm,
You can see Sylvester's woolshed fair enough.
Five miles we used to call it from our homestead to the place
Where the big tree spans the roadway like an arch;
'Twas here we ran the dingo down that gave us such a chase
Eight years ago—or was it nine?—last March.

'Twas merry in the glowing morn, among the gleaming grass,
To wander as we've wandered many a mile,
And blow the cool tobacco cloud, and watch the white wreaths pass,
Sitting loosely in the saddle all the while.

'Twas merry 'mid the blackwoods, when we spied the
station roofs,
To wheel the wild scrub cattle at the yard,
With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run of
hoofs;
Oh! the hardest day was never then too hard!

Aye! we had a glorious gallop after 'Starlight' and his
gang,
When they bolted from Sylvester's on the flat;
How the sun-dried reed-beds crackled, how the flint-
strewn ranges rang
To the strokes of 'Mountaineer' and 'Acrobat'.
Hard behind them in the timber, harder still across the
heath,
Close beside them through the tea-tree scrub we dash'd;
And the golden-tinted fern leaves, how they rustled
underneath!
And the honeysuckle osiers, how they crash'd!

We led the hunt throughout, Ned, on the chestnut and
the grey,
And the troopers were three hundred yards behind,
While we emptied our six-shooters on the bushrangers
at bay,
In the creek with stunted box-tree for a blind!
There you grappled with the leader, man to man and
horse to horse,
And you roll'd together when the chestnut rear'd;
He blazed away and missed you in that shallow water-
course—
A narrow shave—his powder singed your beard!

In these hours when life is ebbing, how those days when life was young
Come back to us ; how clearly I recall
Even the yarns Jack Hall invented, and the songs Jem Roper sung ;
And where are now Jem Roper and Jack Hall ?

Aye ! nearly all our comrades of the old colonial school,
Our ancient boon companions, Ned, are gone ;
Hard livers for the most part, somewhat reckless as a rule,
It seems that you and I are left alone.

There was Hughes, who got in trouble through that business with the cards,
It matters little what became of him ;
But a steer ripp'd up MacPherson in the Cooraminta yards,
And Sullivan was drown'd at Sink-or-swim.

And Mostyn—poor Frank Mostyn—died at last a fearful wreck,
In ' the horrors ', at the Upper Wandinong ;
And Carisbrooke, the rider, at the Horsefall broke his neck,
Faith ! the wonder was he saved his neck so long !
Ah ! those days and nights we squandered at the Logans' in the glen—
The Logans, man and wife, have long been dead.
Elsie's tallest girl seems taller than your little Elsie then;
And Ethel is a woman grown and wed.

I've had my share of pastime, and I've done my share of toil,
And life is short—the longest life a span ;
I care not now to tarry for the corn or for the oil,
Or for the wine that maketh glad the heart of man.
For good undone and gifts misspent and resolutions vain,
'Tis somewhat late to trouble. This I know—
I should live the same life over, if I had to live again ;
And the chances are I go where most men go.

The deep blue skies wax dusky, and the tall green trees grow dim,
The sward beneath me seems to heave and fall ;
And sickly, smoky shadows through the sleepy sunlight swim,
And on the very sun's face weave their pall.
Let me slumber in the hollow where the wattle blossoms wave,
With never stone or rail to fence my bed ;
Should the sturdy station children pull the bush flowers on my grave,
I may chance to hear them romping overhead.

THE SWIMMER[1]

With short, sharp, violent lights made vivid,
To southward far as the sight can roam,
Only the swirl of the surges livid,
The seas that climb and the surfs that comb.

[1] Note 13, p. 378.

Only the crag and the cliff to nor'ward,
And the rocks receding, and reefs flung forward,
And waifs wreck'd seaward and wasted shoreward
On shallows sheeted with flaming foam.

A grim, grey coast and a seaboard ghastly,
And shores trod seldom by feet of men—
Where the batter'd hull and the broken mast lie,
They have lain embedded these long years ten.
Love! when we wander'd here together,
Hand in hand through the sparkling weather,
From the heights and hollows of fern and heather,
God surely loved us a little then.

The skies were fairer and shores were firmer—
The blue sea over the bright sand roll'd;
Babble and prattle, and ripple and murmur,
Sheen of silver and glamour of gold—
And the sunset bath'd in the gulf to lend her
A garland of pinks and of purples tender,
A tinge of the sun-god's rosy splendour,
A tithe of his glories manifold.

Man's works are graven, cunning, and skilful
On earth, where his tabernacles are;
But the sea is wanton, the sea is wilful,
And who shall mend her and who shall mar?
Shall we carve success or record disaster
On the bosom of her heaving alabaster?
Will her purple pulse beat fainter or faster
For fallen sparrow or fallen star?

I would that with sleepy, soft embraces
The sea would fold me—would find me rest
In luminous shades of her secret places,
In depths where her marvels are manifest;
So the earth beneath her should not discover
My hidden couch—nor the heaven above her—
As a strong love shielding a weary lover,
I would have her shield me with shining breast.

When light in the realms of space lay hidden,
When life was yet in the womb of time,
Ere flesh was fettered to fruits forbidden,
And souls were wedded to care and crime,
Was the course foreshaped for the future spirit—
A burden of folly, a void of merit—
That would fain the wisdom of stars inherit,
And cannot fathom the seas sublime?

Under the sea or the soil (what matter?
The sea and the soil are under the sun),
As in the former days in the latter,
The sleeping or waking is known of none,
Surely the sleeper shall not awaken
To griefs forgotten or joys forsaken,
For the price of all things given and taken,
The sum of all things done and undone.

Shall we count offences or coin excuses,
Or weigh with scales the soul of a man,
Whom a strong hand binds and a sure hand looses,
Whose light is a spark and his life a span?

The seed he sow'd or the soil he cumber'd,
The time he served or the space he slumber'd,
Will it profit a man when his days are number'd,
Or his deeds since the days of his life began ?

One, glad because of the light, saith, 'Shall not
The righteous Judge of all the earth do right,
For behold the sparrows on the house-tops fall not
Save as seemeth to Him good in His sight ?'
And this man's joy shall have no abiding,
Through lights departing and lives dividing,
He is soon as one in the darkness hiding,
One loving darkness rather than light.

A little season of love and laughter,
Of light and life, and pleasure and pain,
And a horror of outer darkness after,
And dust returneth to dust again.
Then the lesser life shall be as the greater,
And the lover of life shall join the hater,
And the one thing cometh sooner or later,
And no one knoweth the loss or gain.

Love of my life ! we had lights in season—
Hard to part from, harder to keep—
We had strength to labour and souls to reason,
And seed to scatter and fruits to reap.
Though time estranges and fate disperses,
We have *had* our loves and our loving-mercies ;
Though the gifts of the light in the end are curses,
Yet bides the gift of the darkness—sleep !

See! girt with tempest and wing'd with thunder,
And clad with lightning and shod with sleet,
The strong winds treading the swift waves sunder
The flying rollers with frothy feet.
One gleam like a bloodshot sword-blade swims on
The sky-line, staining the green gulf crimson,
A death stroke fiercely dealt by a dim sun,
That strikes through his stormy winding sheet.

Oh! brave white horses! you gather and gallop,
The storm sprite loosens the gusty reins;
Now the stoutest ship were the frailest shallop,
In your hollow backs, or your high arch'd manes.
I would ride as never a man has ridden,
In your sleepy, swirling surges hidden,
To gulfs foreshadow'd through straits forbidden,
Where no light wearies and no love wanes.

FROM THE WRECK[1]

'Turn out, boys'—'What's up with our super. to-night?
The man's mad—Two hours to daybreak I'd swear—
Stark mad—why, there isn't a glimmer of light.'
'Take Bolingbroke, Alec, give Jack the young mare;
Look sharp. A large vessel lies jamm'd on the reef,
And many on board still, and some wash'd on shore.
Ride straight with the news—they may send some relief
From the township; and we—we can do little more.

[1] Note 14, p. 379.

You, Alec, you know the near cuts ; you can cross
"The Sugarloaf" ford with a scramble, I think ;
Don't spare the blood filly, nor yet the black horse ;
Should the wind rise, God help them ! the ship will soon sink.
Old Peter's away down the paddock, to drive
The nags to the stockyard as fast as he can—
A life and death matter ; so, lads, look alive.'
Half-dressed, in the dark to the stockyard we ran.

There was bridling with hurry, and saddling with haste,
Confusion and cursing for lack of a moon ;
'Be quick with these buckles, we've no time to waste ;'
'Mind the mare, she can use her hind legs to some tune.'
'Make sure of the crossing-place ; strike the old track,
They've fenced off the new one ; look out for the holes
On the wombat hills.' 'Down with the slip rails ; stand back.'
'And ride, boys, the pair of you, ride for your souls.'

In the low branches heavily laden with dew,
In the long grasses spoiling with deadwood that day,
Where the blackwood, the box, and the bastard oak grew,
Between the tall gum-trees we gallop'd away—
We crashed through a brush fence, we splash'd through a swamp—
We steered for the north near 'The Eaglehawk's Nest'—
We bore to the left, just beyond 'The Red Camp',
And round the black tea-tree belt wheel'd to the west—

We cross'd a low range sickly scented with musk
From wattle-tree blossom—we skirted a marsh—
Then the dawn faintly dappled with orange the dusk,
And peal'd overhead the jay's laughter note harsh,
And shot the first sunstreak behind us, and soon
The dim dewy uplands were dreamy with light;
And full on our left flash'd 'The Reedy Lagoon',
And sharply 'The Sugarloaf' rear'd on our right.
A smother'd curse broke through the bushman's brown beard,
He turn'd in his saddle, his brick-colour'd cheek
Flush'd feebly with sundawn, said, 'Just what I fear'd;
Last fortnight's late rainfall has flooded the creek.'

Black Bolingbroke snorted, and stood on the brink
One instant, then deep in the dark sluggish swirl
Plunged headlong. I saw the horse suddenly sink,
Till round the man's armpits the waves seemed to curl.
We follow'd,—one cold shock, and deeper we sank
Than they did, and twice tried the landing in vain;
The third struggle won it; straight up the steep bank
We stagger'd, then out on the skirts of the plain.

The stockrider, Alec, at starting had got
The lead, and had kept it throughout; 'twas his boast
That through thickest of scrub he could steer like a shot,
And the black horse was counted the best on the coast.
The mare had been awkward enough in the dark,
She was eager and headstrong, and barely half broke;
She had had me too close to a big stringy-bark,
And had made a near thing of a crooked sheoak.

But now on the open, lit up by the morn,
She flung the white foam-flakes from nostril to neck,
And chased him—I hatless, with shirt-sleeves all torn
(For he may ride ragged who rides from a wreck)—
And faster and faster across the wide heath
We rode till we raced. Then I gave her her head,
And she—stretching out with the bit in her teeth—
She caught him, outpaced him, and passed him, and led.
We neared the new fence ; we were wide of the track ;
I look'd right and left—she had never been tried
At a stiff leap. 'Twas little he cared on the black.
'You're more than a mile from the gateway,' he cried.
I hung to her head, touched her flank with the spurs
(In the red streak of rail not the ghost of a gap) ;
She shortened her long stroke, she pricked her sharp ears,
She flung it behind her with hardly a rap—
I saw the post quiver where Bolingbroke struck,
And guessed that the pace we had come the last mile
Had blown him a bit (he could jump like a buck).
We galloped more steadily then for a while.

The heath was soon pass'd, in the dim distance lay
The mountain. The sun was just clearing the tips
Of the ranges to eastward. The mare—could she stay ?
She was bred very nearly as clean as Eclipse ;
She led, and as oft as he came to her side,
She took the bit free and untiring as yet ;
Her neck was arched double, her nostrils were wide,
And the tips of her tapering ears nearly met—

'You're lighter than I am,' said Alec at last;
'The horse is dead beat and the mare isn't blown.
She must be a good one—ride on and ride fast,
You know your way now.' So I rode on alone.

Still galloping forward we pass'd the two flocks
At M'Intyre's hut and M'Allister's hill—
She was galloping strong at the Warrigal Rocks—
On the Wallaby Range she was galloping still—
And over the wasteland and under the wood,
By down and by dale, and by fell and by flat,
She gallop'd, and here in the stirrups I stood
To ease her, and there in the saddle I sat
To steer her. We suddenly struck the red loam
Of the track near the troughs—then she reeled on the rise—
From her crest to her croup covered over with foam,
And blood-red her nostrils, and bloodshot her eyes,
A dip in the dell where the wattle fire bloomed—
A bend round a bank that had shut out the view—
Large framed in the mild light the mountain had loomed,
With a tall, purple peak bursting out from the blue.

I pull'd her together, I press'd her, and she
Shot down the decline to the Company's yard,
And on by the paddocks, yet under my knee
I could feel her heart thumping the saddle-flaps hard.
Yet a mile and another, and now we were near
The goal, and the fields and the farms flitted past;
And 'twixt the two fences I turned with a cheer,
For a green grass-fed mare 'twas a far thing and fast;

And labourers, roused by her galloping hoofs,
Saw bare-headed rider and foam-sheeted steed;
And shone the white walls and the slate-covered roofs
Of the township. I steadied her then—I had need—
Where stood the old chapel (where stands the new church—
Since chapels to churches have changed in that town).
A short, sidelong stagger, a long, forward lurch,
A slight, choking sob, and the mare had gone down.
I slipp'd off the bridle, I slackened the girth,
I ran on and left her and told them my news;
I saw her soon afterwards. What was she worth?
How much for her hide? She had never worn shoes.

NO NAME[1]

'A stone upon her heart and head,
But no name written on that stone;
Sweet neighbours whisper low instead,
This sinner was a loving one.'—*Mrs. Browning.*

'Tis a nameless stone that stands at your head—
The gusts in the gloomy gorges whirl
Brown leaves and red till they cover your bed—
Now I trust that your sleep is a sound one, girl!

I said in my wrath, when his shadow cross'd
From your garden gate to your cottage door,
'What does it matter for one soul lost?
Millions of souls have been lost before.'

[1] Note 15 A, p. 379.

Yet I warn'd you—ah ! but my words came true—
' Perhaps some day you will find him out.'
He who was not worthy to loosen your shoe,
Does his conscience therefore prick him ? I doubt.

You laugh'd and were deaf to my warning voice—
Blush'd and were blind to his cloven hoof—
You have had your chance, you have taken your choice—
How could I help you, standing aloof ?

He has prosper'd well with the world—he says
I am mad—if so, and if he be sane,
I, at least, give God thanksgiving and praise
That there lies between us one difference plain.

. . . . . .

You in your beauty above me bent
In the pause of a wild west country ball—
Spoke to me—touched me without intent—
Made me your servant for once and all.[1]

Light laughter rippled your rose-red lip,
And you swept my cheek with a shining curl,
That stray'd from your shoulder's snowy tip—
Now I pray that your sleep is a sound one, girl !

From a long way off to look at your charms
Made my blood run redder in every vein,
And he—he has held you long in his arms,
And has kiss'd you over and over again.

[1] Note 15 B, p. 380.

Is it well that he keeps well out of my way ?
If we met, he and I—we alone—we two—
Would I give him one moment's grace to pray ?
Not I, for the sake of the soul he slew.

A life like a shuttlecock may be toss'd
With the hand of fate for a battledore ;
But it matters much for your sweet soul lost,
As much as a million souls and more.

And I know that if, here or there, alone,
I found him, fairly and face to face,
Having slain his body, I would slay my own,
That my soul to Satan his soul might chase.

He hardens his heart in the public way—
Who am I ? I am but a nameless churl ;
But God will put all things straight some day—
Till then may your sleep be a sound one, girl !

WOLF AND HOUND[1]

'The hills like giants at a hunting lay,
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay.'—*Browning.*

You'll take my tale with a little salt,
But it needs none, nevertheless,
I was foil'd completely, fairly at fault,
Dishearten'd, too, I confess.

[1] Note 16, p. 380.

At the splitters' tent I had seen the track
Of horse-hoofs fresh on the sward,
And though Darby Lynch and Donovan Jack
(Who could swear through a ten-inch board)
Solemnly swore he had not been there,
I was just as sure that they lied,
For to Darby all that is foul was fair,
And Jack for his life was tried.

We had run him for seven miles and more
As hard as our nags could split;
At the start they were all too weary and sore,
And his was quite fresh and fit.
Young Marsden's pony had had enough
On the plain, where the chase was hot;
We breasted the swell of the Bittern's Bluff,
And Mark couldn't raise a trot;
When the sea, like a splendid silver shield,
To the south-west suddenly lay;
On the brow of the Beetle the chestnut reel'd,
And I bid good-bye to M'Crea—
And I was alone when the mare fell lame,
With a pointed flint in her shoe,
On the Stony Flats: I had lost the game,
And what was a man to do?

I turned away with no fixed intent
And headed for Hawthorndell;
I could neither eat in the splitters' tent,
Nor drink at the splitters' well.
I knew that they gloried in my mishap,
And I cursed them between my teeth—
A blood-red sunset through Brayton's Gap
Flung a lurid fire on the heath.

Could I reach the Dell? I had little reck,
And with scarce a choice of my own
I threw the reins on Miladi's neck—
I had freed her foot from the stone.
That season most of the swamps were dry,
And after so hard a burst
In the sultry noon of so hot a sky
She was keen to appease her thirst—
Or by instinct urged or impelled by fate—
I care not to solve these things—
Certain it is that she took me straight
To the Warrigal water springs.

I can shut my eyes and recall the ground
As though it were yesterday—
With a shelf of the low, grey rocks girt round,
The springs in their basin lay;
Woods to the east and wolds to the north
In the sundown sullenly bloom'd;
Dead black on a curtain of crimson cloth
Large peaks to the westward loomed.
I led Miladi through weed and sedge,
She leisurely drank her fill;
There was something close to the water's edge,
And my heart with one leap stood still,
For a horse's shoe and a rider's boot
Had left clean prints on the clay;
Some one had watered his beast on foot.
'Twas he—he had gone. Which way?
Then the mouth of the cavern faced me fair,
As I turned and fronted the rocks;
So, at last, I had pressed the wolf to his lair,
I had run to his earth the fox.

I thought so. Perhaps he was resting. Perhaps
He was waiting, watching for me.
I examined all my revolver caps,
I hitched my mare to a tree—
I had sworn to have him, alive or dead,
And to give him a chance was loth.
He knew his life had been forfeited—
He had even heard of my oath.
In my stocking'd soles to the shelf I crept,
I crawl'd safe into the cave—
All silent—if he was there he slept
Not there. All dark as the grave.

Through the crack I could hear the leaden hiss!
See the livid face through the flame!
How strange it seems that a man should miss
When his life depends on his aim!
There couldn't have been a better light
For him, nor a worse for me.
We were coop'd up, caged like beasts for a fight,
And dumb as dumb beasts were we.

Flash! flash! bang! bang! and we blazed away,
And the grey roof reddened and rang;
Flash! flash! and I felt his bullet flay
The tip of my ear. Flash! bang!
Bang! flash! and my pistol arm fell broke;
I struck with my left hand then—
Struck at a corpse through a cloud of smoke—
I had shot him dead in his den!

DE TE

A BURNING glass of burnish'd brass,
The calm sea caught the noontide rays,
And sunny slopes of golden grass
And wastes of weed-flower seem to blaze.
Beyond the shining silver-greys,
Beyond the shades of denser bloom,
The sky-line girt with glowing haze,
The farthest faintest forest gloom,
And the everlasting hills that loom.

We heard the hound beneath the mound,
We scared the swamp hawk hovering nigh—
We had not sought for that we found—
He lay as dead men only lie,
With wan cheek whitening in the sky,
Through the wild heath flowers, white and red.
The dumb brute that had seen him die,
Close crouching, howl'd beside the head,
Brute burial service o'er the dead.

The brow was rife with seams of strife—
A lawless death made doubly plain
The ravage of a reckless life;
The havoc of a hurricane
Of passions through that breadth of brain,
Like headlong horses that had run
Riot, regardless of the rein—
'Madman, he might have lived and done
Better than most men,' whisper'd one.

The beams and blots that Heaven allots
To every life with life begin.
Fool! would you change the leopard's spots,
Or blanch the Ethiopian's skin?
What more could he have hoped to win,
What better things have thought to gain,
So shapen—so conceived in sin?
No life is wholly void and vain,
Just and unjust share sun and rain.

Were new life sent, and life misspent,
Wiped out (if such to God seemed good),
Would he (being as he was) repent,
Or could he, even if he would,
Who heeded not things understood
(Though dimly) even in savage lands
By some who worship stone or wood,
Or bird or beast, or who stretch hands
Sunward on shining Eastern sands?

And crime has cause. Nay, never pause
Idly to feel a pulseless wrist;
Brace up the massive, square-shaped jaws,
Unclench the stubborn, stiff'ning fist,
And close those eyes through film and mist
That kept the old defiant glare;
And answer, wise Psychologist,
Whose science claims some little share
Of truth, what better things lay there?

Aye! thought and mind were there,—some kind
Of faculty that men mistake
For talent when their wits are blind,—
An aptitude to mar and break

What others diligently make.
This was the worst and best of him—
Wise with the cunning of the snake,
Brave with the she wolf's courage grim,
Dying hard and dumb, torn limb from limb.

And you, Brown, you're a doctor; cure
You can't, but you can kill, and he—
'*Witness his mark*'—he signed last year,
And now he signs John Smith, J.P.
We'll hold our inquest *now*, we three;
I'll be your coroner for once;
I think old Oswald ought to be
Our foreman—Jones is such a dunce,—
There's more brain in the bloodhound's sconce.

No man may shirk the allotted work,
The deed to do, the death to die;
At least I think so,—neither Turk,
Nor Jew, nor infidel am I,—
And yet I wonder when I try
To solve one question, may or must,
And shall I solve it by and by,
Beyond the dark, beneath the dust?
I trust so, and I only trust.

Aye, what they will, such trifles kill,
Comrade, for one good deed of yours,
Your history shall not help to fill
The mouths of many brainless boors.

It may be death absolves or cures
The sin of life. 'Twere hazardous
To assert so. If the sin endures,
Say only, 'God, who has judged him thus,
Be merciful to him and us.'

HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE [1]

A LAY OF THE LOAMSHIRE HUNT CUP

'AYE, squire,' said Stevens, 'they back him at evens;
The race is all over, bar shouting, they say;
The Clown ought to beat her; Dick Neville is sweeter
Than ever—he swears he can win all the way.

'A gentleman rider—well, I'm an outsider,
But if he's a gent who the mischief 's a jock?
You swells mostly blunder, Dick rides for the plunder,
He rides, too, like thunder—he sits like a rock.

'He calls "hunted fairly" a horse that has barely
Been stripp'd for a trot within sight of the hounds,
A horse that at Warwick beat Birdlime and Yorick,
And gave Abdelkader at Aintree nine pounds.

'They say we have no test to warrant a protest;
Dick rides for a lord and stands in with a steward;
The light of their faces they show him—his case is
Prejudged and his verdict already secured.

[1] Note 17, p. 380.

'But none can outlast her, and few travel faster,
She strides in her work clean away from The Drag;
You hold her and sit her, she couldn't be fitter,
Whenever you hit her she'll spring like a stag.

'And p'rhaps the green jacket, at odds though they back it,
May fall, or there's no knowing what may turn up.
The mare is quite ready, sit still and ride steady,
Keep cool; and I think you may just win the Cup.'

Dark-brown with tan muzzle, just stripped for the tussle,
Stood Iseult, arching her neck to the curb,
A lean head and fiery, strong quarters and wiry,
A loin rather light, but a shoulder superb.

Some parting injunction, bestowed with great unction,
I tried to recall, but forgot like a dunce,
When Reginald Murray, full tilt on White Surrey,
Came down in a hurry to start us at once.

'Keep back in the yellow! Come up on Othello!
Hold hard on the chestnut! Turn round on The Drag!
Keep back there on Spartan! Back you, sir, in tartan!
So, steady there, easy!' and down went the flag.

We started, and Kerr made strong running on Mermaid,
Through furrows that led to the first stake-and-bound,
The crack, half extended, look'd bloodlike and splendid,
Held wide on the right where the headland was sound.

I pulled hard to baffle her rush with the snaffle,
Before her two-thirds of the field got away ;
All through the wet pasture where floods of the last year
Still loitered, they clotted my crimson with clay.

The fourth fence, a wattle, floor'd Monk and Bluebottle ;
The Drag came to grief at the blackthorn and ditch,
The rails toppled over Redoubt and Red Rover,
The lane stopped Lycurgus and Leicestershire Witch.

She passed like an arrow Kildare and Cock Sparrow,
And Mantrap and Mermaid refused the stone wall ;
And Giles on The Greyling came down at the paling,
And I was left sailing in front of them all.

I took them a burster, nor eased her nor nursed her
Until the Black Bullfinch led into the plough,
And through the strong bramble we bored with a scramble—
My cap was knock'd off by the hazel-tree bough.

Where furrows looked lighter I drew the rein tighter—
Her dark chest all dappled with flakes of white foam,
Her flanks mud-bespattered, a weak rail she shattered—
We landed on turf with our heads turn'd for home.

Then crash'd a low binder, and then close behind her
The sward to the strokes of the favourite shook ;
His rush roused her mettle, yet ever so little
She shorten'd her stride as we raced at the brook.

She rose when I hit her. I saw the stream glitter,
A wide scarlet nostril flashed close to my knee,
Between sky and water The Clown came and caught her,
The space that he cleared was a caution to see.

And forcing the running, discarding all cunning,
A length to the front went the rider in green ;
A long strip of stubble, and then the big double,
Two stiff flights of rails with a quickset between.

She raced at the rasper, I felt my knees grasp her,
I found my hands give to her strain on the bit ;
She rose when The Clown did—our silks as we bounded
Brush'd lightly, our stirrups clash'd loud as we lit

A rise steeply sloping, a fence with stone coping—
The last—we diverged round the base of the hill ;
His path was the nearer, his leap was the clearer,
I flogg'd up the straight and he led sitting still.

She came to his quarter, and on still I brought her,
And up to his girth, to his breastplate she drew,
A short prayer from Neville just reach'd me, 'The Devil!'
He mutter'd—lock'd level the hurdles we flew.

A hum of hoarse cheering, a dense crowd careering,
All sights seen obscurely, all shouts vaguely heard ;
'The green wins!' 'The crimson!' The multitude swims on,
And figures are blended and features are blurr'd.

'The horse is her master!' 'The green forges past her!'
'The Clown will outlast her!' 'The Clown wins!'
'The Clown!'
The white railing races with all the white faces,
The chestnut outpaces, outstretches the brown.

On still past the gateway she strains in the straightway,
Still struggles, 'The Clown by a short neck at most,'
He swerves, the green scourges, the stand rocks and surges,
And flashes, and verges, and flits the white post.

Aye! so ends the tussle,—I knew the tan muzzle
Was first, though the ring-men were yelling 'Dead heat!'
A nose I could swear by, but Clarke said, 'The mare by
A short head.' And that's how the favourite was beat.

FRAGMENTARY SCENES

FROM

THE ROAD TO AVERNUS

AN UNPUBLISHED DRAMATIC LYRIC

Scene I.—'DISCONTENT'

Laurence Raby

Laurence:

I said to young Allan M'Ilveray,
Beside the swift swirls of the North,
When, in lilac shot through with a silver ray,
We haul'd the strong salmon fish forth—
Said only, 'He gave us some trouble
To land him, and what does he weigh?
Our friend has caught one that weighs double.
The game for the candle won't pay
Us to-day,
We may tie up our rods and away.'

I said to old Norman M'Gregor,
Three leagues to the west of Glen Dhu—
I had drawn, with a touch of the trigger,
The best *bead* that ever I drew—
Said merely, 'For birds in the stubble
I once had an eye—I could swear
He's down—but he's not worth the trouble
Of seeking. You once shot a bear
In his lair—
'Tis only a buck that lies there.'

I said to Lord Charles only last year,
The time that we topp'd the oak rail
Between Wharton's plough and Whynne's pasture,
And clear'd the big brook in Blakesvale—
We only—at Warburton's double
He fell, then I finished the run
And kill'd clean—said, 'So bursts a bubble
That shone half an hour in the sun—
What is won?
Your sire clear'd and captured a gun.'

I said to myself, in true sorrow,
I said yestere'en, 'A fair prize
Is won, and it may be to-morrow
'Twill not seem so fair in thine eyes—
Real life is a race through sore trouble,
That gains not an inch on the goal,
And bliss an intangible bubble
That cheats an unsatisfied soul,
And the whole
Of the rest an illegible scroll.'

Scene VII.—'TWO EXHORTATIONS'

A Shooting-box in the West of Ireland. A Bedchamber.

Laurence Raby *and* Melchior. *Night.*

Melchior:

Surely, in the great beginning God made all things good, and still
That soul-sickness men call sinning entered not without His will.
Nay, our wisest have asserted that, as shade enhances light,
Evil is but good perverted, wrong is but the foil of right.
Banish sickness, then you banish joy for health to all that live;
Slay all sin, all good must vanish, good being but comparative.
Sophistry, you say—yet listen: look you skyward, there 'tis known
Worlds on worlds in myriads glisten—larger, lovelier than our own—
This has been, and this still shall be, here as there, in sun or star:
These things are to be and will be, those things were to be and are.
Man in man's imperfect nature is by imperfection taught:
Add one cubit to your stature if you can by taking thought.

Laurence:

Thus you would not teach that peasant, though he calls you 'father'.

Melchior :
True,
I should magnify this present, mystify that future, too—
We adapt our conversation always to our hearer's light.

Laurence :
I am not of your persuasion.

Melchior :
Yet the difference is but slight.

Laurence :
I, *even I*, say, ' He who barters worldly weal for heavenly worth
He does well '—your saints and martyrs were examples here on earth.

Melchior :
Aye, in earlier Christian ages, while the heathen empire stood,
When the war 'twixt saints and sages cried aloud for saintly blood,
Christ was then their model truly. Now, if all were meek and pure,
Save the ungodly and the unruly, would the Christian Church endure ?
Shall the toiler or the fighter dream by day and watch by night,
Turn the left cheek to the smiter, smitten rudely on the right ?
Strong men must encounter bad men—so-called saints of latter days
Have been mostly pious madmen, lusting after righteous praise—

Or the thralls of superstition, doubtless worthy some reward,
Since they came by their condition hardly of their free accord.
'Tis but madness, sad and solemn, that these fakir-Christians feel—
Saint Stylites on his column gratified a morbid zeal.

Laurence:
By your showing, good is really on a par (of worth) with ill.

Melchior:
Nay, I said not so; I merely tell you both some ends fulfil—
Priestly vows were my vocation, fast and vigil wait for me.
You must work and face temptation. Never should the strong man flee,
Though God wills the inclination with the soul at war to be. (*Pauses.*)
In the strife 'twixt flesh and spirit, while you can the spirit aid.
Should you fall not less your merit, be not for a fall afraid.
Whatsoe'er most right, most fit is you shall do. When all is done
Chaunt the noble *Nunc Dimittis—Benedicimur*, my son.
[*Exit* MELCHIOR.

Laurence (*alone*):
Why do I provoke these wrangles? Melchior talks (as well he may)
With the tongues of men and angels.

(*Takes up a pamphlet.*) What has this man got to say ?
(*Reads.*) *Sic sacerdos fatur* (*eius nomen quondam erat Burgo*).
Mala mens est, caro peius, anima infirma, ergo
I nunc, ora, sine mora—orat etiam Sancta Virgo.
(*Thinks.*)
(*Speaks.*) So it seems they mean to make her wed the usurer, Nathan Lee.
Poor Estelle ! her friends forsake her ; what has this to do with me ?
Glad I am, at least, that Helen still refuses to discard
Her, through tales false gossips tell in spite or heedlessness.—'Tis hard ! —
Lee, the Levite !—some few years back Herbert horsewhipp'd him—the cur
Show'd his teeth and laid his ears back. Now his wealth has purchased her.
Must his baseness mar her brightness ? Shall the callous, cunning churl
Revel in the rosy whiteness of that golden-headed girl ?
(*Thinks and smokes.*)
(*Reads.*) *Cito certe venit vitae finis* (*sic sacerdos fatur*),
Nunc audite omnes, ite, vobis fabula narratur,
Nunc orate et laudate, laudat etiam Alma Mater.
(*Muses.*) Such has been, and such shall still be, here as there, in sun or star ;
These things are to be and will be, those things were to be and are.
If I thought that speech worth heeding I should——Nay, it seems to me
More like Satan's special pleading than like *Gloria Domine.*

(*Lies down on his couch.*)

(*Reads.*) *Et tu quoque, frater meus, facta mala quod fecisti*
Denique confundit Deus omnes res quas tetegisti.
Nunc si unquam, nunc aut nunquam, sanguine adiuro
Christi.

Scene IX.—'IN THE GARDEN'

Aylmer's Garden, near the Lake. Laurence Raby *and* Estelle

He:

Come to the bank where the boat is moor'd to the willow-tree low;
Bertha, the baby, won't notice, Brian, the blockhead, won't know.

She:

Bertha is not such a baby, sir, as you seem to suppose;
Brian, a blockhead he may be, more than you think for he knows.

He:

This much, at least, of your brother, from the beginning he knew
Somewhat concerning that other made such a fool of by you.

She:

Firmer those bonds were and faster, Frank was my spaniel, my slave,
You! you would fain be my master; mark you! the difference is grave.

He:

Call me your spaniel, your starling, take me and treat me as these,

I would be anything, darling! aye, whatsoever you please.
Brian and Basil are 'punting', leave them their dice and their wine,
Bertha is butterfly hunting, surely one hour shall be mine.
See, I have done with all duty; see, I can dare all disgrace,
Only to look at your beauty, feasting my eyes on your face.

She:

Look at me, aye, till your eyes ache! How, let me ask, will it end?
Neither for your sake nor my sake, but for the sake of my friend?

He:

Is she your friend then? I own it, this is all wrong, and the rest,
Frustra sed anima monet, caro quod fortius est.

She:

Not quite so close, Laurence Raby, not with your arm round my waist;
Something to look at I may be, nothing to touch or to taste.

He:

Wilful as ever and wayward; why did you tempt me, Estelle?

She:

You misinterpret each stray word, you for each inch take an ell.
Lightly all laws and ties trammel me, I am warn'd for all that.

He (aside) :

Perhaps she will swallow her camel when she has strained at her gnat.

She :

Therefore take thought and consider, weigh well, as I do, the whole,

You for mere beauty a bidder, say, would you barter a soul ?

He :

Girl ! *that may* happen, but *this is ;* after this welcome the worst ;

Blest for one hour by your kisses, let me be evermore curs'd.

Talk not of ties to me reckless, here every tie I discard—

Make me your girdle, your necklace—

She : Laurence, you kiss me too hard.

He :

Aye, 'tis the road to Avernus, *n'est ce pas vrai donc, ma belle ?*

There let them bind us or burn us, *mais le jeu vaut la chandelle.*

Am I your lord or your vassal ? Are you my sun or my torch ?

You, when I look at you, dazzle, yet when I touch you, you scorch.

She :

Yonder are Brian and Basil watching us fools from the porch.

Scene X.—'AFTER THE QUARREL'

Laurence Raby's Chamber. Laurence *enters, a little the worse for liquor.*

Laurence:

He never gave me a chance to speak,
And he call'd her—worse than a dog—
The girl stood up with a crimson cheek,
And I fell'd him there like a log.

I can feel the blow on my knuckles yet—
He feels it more on his brow.
In a thousand years we shall all forget
The things that trouble us now.

Scene XI.—'TEN PACES OFF'

An Open Country. Laurence Raby *and* Forrest, Brian Aylmer *and* Prescot

Forrest:

I've won the two tosses from Prescot;
Now hear me, and hearken and heed,
And pull that vile flower from your waistcoat,
And throw down that beast of a weed;
I'm going to give you the signal
I gave Harry Hunt at Boulogne,
The morning he met Major Bignell,
And shot him as dead as a stone;
For he must look round on his right hand
To watch the white flutter—that stops
His aim, for it takes off his sight, and
I cough while the handkerchief drops.

And you keep both eyes on his figure,
Old fellow, and don't take them off.
You've got the sawhandled hair trigger—
You sight him and shoot when I cough.

Laurence (aside):

Though God will never forgive me,
Though men make light of my name,
Though my sin and my shame outlive me,
I shall not outlast my shame.
The coward, does he mean to miss me?
His right hand shakes like a leaf;
Shall I live for my friends to hiss me,
Of fools and of knaves the chief?
Shall I live for my foes to twit me?
He has master'd his nerve again—
He is firm, he will surely hit me—
Will he reach the heart or the brain?
One long look eastward and northward—
One prayer—'Our Father which art'—
And the cough chimes in with the fourth word,
And I shoot skyward—the heart.

Last Scene.—'EXEUNT'

Helen Raby

Where the grave-deeps rot, where the grave-dews rust,
They dug, crying, 'Earth to earth'—
Crying, 'Ashes to ashes and dust to dust'—
And what are my poor prayers worth?
Upon whom shall I call, or in whom shall I trust,
Though death were indeed new birth?

And they bid me be glad for my baby's sake,
That she suffered sinless and young—
Would they have me be glad when my breasts still ache
Where that small, soft, sweet mouth clung ?
I am glad that the heart will so surely break
That has been so bitterly wrung.

He was false, they tell me, and what if he were ?
I can only shudder and pray,
Pouring out my soul in a passionate prayer
For the soul that he cast away ;
Was there nothing that once was created fair
In the potter's perishing clay ?

Is it well for the sinner that souls endure ?
For the sinless soul is it well ?
Does the pure child lisp to the angels pure ?
And where does the strong man dwell,
If the sad assurance of priests be sure,
Or the tale that our preachers tell ?

The unclean has follow'd the undefiled,
And the ill *may* regain the good,
And the man *may* be even as the little child !
We are children lost in the wood—
Lord ! lead us out of this tangled wild,
Where the wise and the prudent have been beguil'd,
And only the babes have stood.

DOUBTFUL DREAMS[1]

Aye, snows are rife in December,
And sheaves are in August yet,
And you would have me remember,
And I would rather forget;
In the bloom of the May-day weather,
In the blight of October chill,
We were dreamers of old together,—
As of old, are you dreaming still?

For nothing on earth is sadder
Than the dream that cheated the grasp,
The flower that turned to the adder,
The fruit that changed to the asp;
When the day-spring in darkness closes,
As the sunset fades from the hills,
With the fragrance of perish'd roses,
With the music of parch'd-up rills.

When the sands on the sea-shore nourish
Red clover and yellow corn;
When figs on the thistle flourish,
And grapes grow thick on the thorn;
When the dead branch, blighted and blasted,
Puts forth green leaves in the spring,
Then the dream that life has outlasted
Dead comfort to life may bring.

I have changed the soil and the season,
But whether skies freeze or flame,
The soil they flame on or freeze on
Is changed in little save name;

[1] Note 18, p. 380.

The loadstone points to the nor'ward,
The river runs to the sea;
And you would have me look forward,
And backward I fain would flee.

I remember the bright spring garlands,
The gold that spangled the green,
And the purple on fairy far lands,
And the white and the red bloom, seen
From the spot where we last lay dreaming
Together—yourself and I—
The soft grass beneath us gleaming,
Above us the great grave sky.

And we spoke thus: 'Though we have trodden
Rough paths in our boyish years;
And some with our sweat are sodden,
And some are salt with our tears;
Though we stumble still, walking blindly,
Our paths shall be made all straight;
We are weak, but the heavens are kindly,
The skies are compassionate.'

Is the clime of the old and younger,
Where the young dreams longer are nursed?
With the old insatiable hunger,
With the old unquenchable thirst,
Are you longing, as in the old years
We have longed so often in vain;
Fellow-toilers still, fellow-soldiers,
Though the seas have sundered us twain?

But the young dreams surely have faded!
Young dreams!—old dreams of young days—
Shall the new dream vex us as they did?
Or as things worth censure or praise?
Real toil is ours, real trouble,
Dim dreams of pleasure and pride;
Let the dreams disperse like a bubble,
So the toil like a dream subside.

Vain toil! men better and braver
Rose early and rested late,
Whose burdens than ours were graver,
And sterner than ours their hate.
What fair reward had Achilles?
What rest could Alcides win?
Vain toil! 'Consider the lilies,
They toil not, neither do spin.'

Nor for mortal toiling nor spinning
Will the matters of mortals mend;
As it was so in the beginning,
It shall be so in the end.
The web that the weavers weave ill
Shall not be woven aright
Till the good is brought forth from evil,
As day is brought forth from night.

Vain dreams! for our fathers cherish'd
High hopes in the days that were;
And these men wonder'd and perish'd,
Nor better than these we fare;

And our due at least is their due:
They fought against odds and fell;
'*En avant, les enfants perdus!*'
We fight against odds as well.

The skies! Will the great skies care for
Our footsteps, straighten our path,
Or strengthen our weakness? Wherefore?
We have rather incurr'd their wrath;
When against the Captain of Hazor
The stars in their courses fought,
Did the sky shed merciful rays, or
With love was the sunshine fraught?

Can they favour man—can they wrong man—
The unapproachable skies?
Though these gave strength to the strong man,
And wisdom gave to the wise;
When strength is turn'd to derision,
And wisdom brought to dismay,
Shall we wake from a troubled vision,
Or rest from a toilsome day?

Nay! I cannot tell. Peradventure
Our very toil is a dream,
And the works that we praise or censure,
It may be, they only seem.
If so, I would fain awaken,
Or sleep more soundly than so,
Or by dreamless sleep overtaken,
The dream I would fain forgo.

For the great things of earth are small things,
The longest life is a span,
And there is an end to all things,
A season to every man,
Whose glory is dust and ashes,
Whose spirit is but a spark,
That out from the darkness flashes,
And flickers out in the dark.

We remember the pangs that wrung us
When some went down to the pit,
Who faded as leaves among us,
Who flitted as shadows flit;
What visions under the stone lie?
What dreams in the shroud sleep dwell,
For we saw the earth pit only,
And we heard only the knell.

We know not whether they slumber
Who waken on earth no more,
As the stars of the heights in number,
As sands on the deep sea-shore.
Shall stiffness bind them, and starkness
Enthral them, by field and flood,
Till 'the sun shall be turn'd to darkness,
And the moon shall be turn'd to blood?'

We know not!—worse may enthral men—
'The wages of sin are death;'
And so death pass'd upon all men,
For sin was born with man's breath.

Then the labourer spent with sinning,
His hire with his life shall spend;
For it was so in the beginning,
And shall be so in the end.

There is life in the blacken'd ember
While a spark is smouldering yet;
In a dream e'en now I remember
That dream I had lief forget—
I had lief forget, I had e'en lief
That dream with *this* doubt should die—
'*If we did these things in the green leaf,*
What shall be done in the dry?'

THE RHYME OF JOYOUS GARDE

Through the lattice rushes the south wind, dense
With fumes of the flowery frankincense
From hawthorn blossoming thickly;
And gold is shower'd on grass unshorn,
And poppy-fire on shuddering corn,
With May-dew flooded and flush'd with morn,
And scented with sweetness sickly.

The bloom and brilliance of summer days,
The buds that brighten, the fields that blaze,
The fruits that ripen and redden,
And all the gifts of a God-sent light
Are sadder things in my shameful sight
Than the blackest gloom of the bitterest night,
When the senses darken and deaden.

For the days recall what the nights efface,
Scenes of glory and seasons of grace,
For which there is no returning—
Else the days were even as the nights to me,
Now the axe is laid to the root of the tree,
And to-morrow the barren trunk may be
Cut down—cast forth for the burning.

Would God I had died the death that day
When the bishop blessed us before the fray
At the shrine of the Saviour's Mother;
We buckled the spur, we braced the belt,
Arthur and I—together we knelt,
And the grasp of his kingly hand I felt
As the grasp of an only brother.

The body and the blood of Christ we shared,
Knees bended and heads bow'd down and bared,
We listened throughout the praying.
Eftsoon the shock of the foe we bore,
Shoulder to shoulder on Severn's shore,
Till our hilts were glued to our hands with gore,
And our sinews slacken'd with slaying.

Was I far from Thy Kingdom, gracious Lord,
With a shattered casque and a shiver'd sword,
On the threshold of Mary's chapel?
Pardie! I had well-nigh won that crown
Which endureth more than a knight's renown,
When the pagan giant had got me down,
Sore spent in the deadly grapple.

May his craven spirit find little grace,
He was seal'd to Satan in any case,
Yet the loser had been the winner;
Had I waxed fainter or he less faint,
Then my soul was free from this loathsome taint,
I had died as a Christian knight—no saint
Perchance, yet a pardon'd sinner.

But I strove full grimly beneath his weight,
I clung to his poignard desperate
I baffled the thrust that followed,
And writhing uppermost rose, to deal,
With bare three inches of broken steel,
One stroke—Ha! the headpiece crash'd piecemeal,
And the knave in his black blood wallow'd.

So I lived for worse—in fullness of time,
When peace for a season sway'd the clime,
And spears for a space were idle;
Trusted and chosen of all the court,
A favoured herald of fair report,
I travell'd eastward, and duly brought
A bride to a queenly bridal.

Pardie! 'twas a morning even as this
(The skies were warmer if aught, I wis,
Albeit the fields were duller;
Or it may be that the envious spring,
Abash'd at the sight of a fairer thing,
Wax'd somewhat sadder of colouring
Because of her faultless colour).

With her through the Lyonesse I rode,
Till the woods with the noontide fervour glow'd,
And there for a space we halted,
Where the intertwining branches made
Cool carpets of olive-tinted shade,
And the floors with fretwork of flame inlaid
From leafy lattices vaulted.

And scarf and mantle for her I spread,
And strewed them over the grassiest bed
And under the greenest awning,
And loosen'd latch and buckle, and freed
From selle and housing the red roan steed,
And the jennet of swift Iberian breed,
That had carried us since the dawning.

The brown thrush sang through the briar and bower,
All flush'd or frosted with forest flower
In the warm sun's wanton glances ;
And I grew deaf to the song bird—blind
To blossom that sweeten'd the sweet spring wind—
I saw her only—a girl reclined
In her girlhood's indolent trances.

And the song and the scent and sense wax'd weak,
The wild rose withered beside the cheek
She poised on her fingers slender ;
The soft spun gold of her glittering hair
Ran rippling into a wondrous snare,
That flooded the round arm bright and bare,
And the shoulder's silvery splendour.

The deep dusk fires in those dreamy eyes,
Like seas clear-coloured in summer skies,
Were guiltless of future treason ;
And I stood watching her, still and mute
Yet the evil seed in my soul found root,
And the sad plant throve, and the sinful fruit
Grew ripe in the shameful season.

Let the sin be mine as the shame was hers,
In desolate days of departed years
She had leisure for shame and sorrow—
There was light repentance and brief remorse,
When I rode against Saxon foes or Norse,
With clang of harness and clatter of horse,
And little heed for the morrow.

And now she is dead, men tell me, and I,
In this living death must I linger and lie
Till my cup to the dregs is drunken ?
I look through the lattice, worn and grim,
With eyelids darken'd and eyesight dim,
And weary body and wasted limb,
And sinew slacken'd and shrunken.

She is dead ! Gone down to the burial-place,
Where the grave-dews cleave to her faultless face ;
Where the grave-sods crumble around her ;
And that bright burden of burnish'd gold,
That once on those waxen shoulders roll'd,
Will it spoil with the damps of the deadly mould ?
Was it shorn when the church vows bound her ?

Now I know full well that the fair spear shaft
Shall never gladden my hand, nor the haft
Of the good sword grow to my fingers ;
Now the maddest fray, the merriest din,
Would fail to quicken this life-stream thin,
Yet the sleepy poison of that sweet sin
In the sluggish current still lingers.

Would God I had slept with the slain men, long
Or ever the heart conceiv'd a wrong
That the innermost soul abhorrèd—
Or ever these lying lips were strained
To her lids, pearl-tinted and purple-vein'd,
Or ever those traitorous kisses stained
The snows of her spotless forehead.

Let me gather a little strength to think,
As one who reels on the outermost brink,
To the innermost gulf descending.
In that truce the longest and last of all,
In the summer nights of that festival—
Soft vesture of samite and silken pall—
The beginning came of the ending.

And one trod softly with sandall'd feet—
Ah ! why are the stolen waters sweet ?—
And one crept stealthily after ;
I would I had taken him there and wrung
His knavish neck when the dark door swung,
Or torn by the roots his treacherous tongue,
And stifled his hateful laughter.

So the smouldering scandal blazed—but he,
My king, to the last put trust in me—
Aye, well was his trust requited!
Now priests may patter, and bells may toll,
He will need no masses to aid his soul;
When the angels open the judgement scroll,
His wrongs will be tenfold righted.

Then dawn'd the day when the mail was donn'd,
And the steed for the strife caparison'd,
But not 'gainst the Norse invader.
Then was bloodshed—not by untoward chance,
As the blood that is drawn by the jouster's lance,
The fray in the castle of Melegrance,
The fight in the lists with Mador.

Then the guilt made manifest, then the siege,
When the true men rallying round the liege
Beleaguer'd his base betrayer;
Then the fruitless parleys, the pleadings vain,
And the hard-fought battles with brave Gawaine,
Twice worsted, and once so nearly slain,
I may well be counted his slayer.

Then the crime of Modred—a little sin
At the side of mine, though the knave was kin
To the king by the knave's hand stricken.
And the once loved knight, was he there to save
That knightly king who that knighthood gave?
Ah, Christ! will he greet me as knight or knave
In the day when the dust shall quicken?

Had he lightly loved, had he trusted less,
I had sinn'd perchance with the sinfulness
That through prayer and penance is pardon'd.
Oh, love most loyal! Oh, faith most sure!
In the purity of a soul so pure
I found my safeguard—I sinn'd secure,
Till my heart to the sin grew harden'd.

We were glad together in gladsome meads,
When they shook to the strokes of our snorting steeds;
We were joyful in joyous lustre
When it flush'd the coppice or fill'd the glade,
When the horn of the Dane or the Saxon bray'd,
And we saw the heathen banner display'd,
And the heathen lances cluster.

Then a steel-shod rush and a steel-clad ring,
And a crash of the spear staves splintering,
And the billowy battle blended.
Riot of chargers, revel of blows,
And fierce flush'd faces of fighting foes,
From croup to bridle, that reel'd and rose,
In a sparkle of sword-play splendid.

And the long, lithe sword in the hand became
As a leaping light, as a falling flame,
As a fire through the flax that hasted;
Slender, and shining, and beautiful,
How it shore through shivering casque and skull,
And never a stroke was void and null,
And never a thrust was wasted.

I have done for ever with all these things—
Deeds that were joyous to knights and kings,
In days that with songs were cherish'd.
The songs are ended, the deeds are done,
There shall none of them gladden me now, not one;
There is nothing good for me under the sun,
But to perish as these things perish'd.

Shall it profit me aught that the bishop seeks
My presence daily, and duly speaks
Soft words of comfort and kindness?
Shall it aught avail me? 'Certes,' he said,
'Though thy soul is darken'd, be not afraid—
God hateth nothing that He hath made—
His light shall disperse thy blindness.'

I am not afraid for myself, although
I know I have had that light, and I know
The greater my condemnation.
When I well-nigh swoon'd in the deep-drawn bliss
Of that first long, sweet, slow, stolen kiss,
I would gladly have given for less than this
Myself, with my soul's salvation.

I would languish thus in some loathsome den,
As a thing of naught in the eyes of men,
In the mouths of men as a byword,
Through years of pain, and when God saw fit,
Singing His praises my soul should flit
To the darkest depth of the nethermost pit,
If *hers* could be wafted skyward.

Lord Christ! have patience a little while,
I have sinn'd because I am utterly vile,
Having light, loving darkness rather.
And I pray Thee deal with me as Thou wilt,
Yet the blood of Thy foes I have freely spilt,
And, moreover, mine is the greater guilt
In the sight of Thee and Thy Father.

That saint, Thy servant, was counted dear
Whose sword in the garden grazed the ear
Of Thine enemy, Lord Redeemer!
Not thus on the shattering visor jarr'd
In this hand the iron of the hilt cross-barr'd,
When the blade was swallow'd up to the guard
Through the teeth of the strong blasphemer.

If ever I smote as a man should smite,
If I struck one stroke that seem'd good in Thy sight,
By Thy loving mercy prevailing,
Lord! let her stand in the light of Thy face,
Cloth'd with Thy love and crown'd with Thy grace,
When I gnash my teeth in the terrible place
That is fill'd with weeping and wailing.

Shall I comfort my soul on account of this?
In the world to come, whatsoever it is,
There is no more earthly ill-doing—
For the dusky darkness shall slay desire,
And the chaff may burn with unquenchable fire,
But for green wild growth of thistle and briar,
At least there is no renewing.

And this grievous burden of life shall change
In the dim hereafter, dreamy and strange,
And sorrows and joys diurnal.
And partial blessings and perishing ills
Shall fade in the praise, or the pang that fills
The glory of God's eternal hills,
Or the gloom of His gulf eternal.

Yet if all things change to the glory of One
Who for all ill-doers gave His Own sweet Son,
To His goodness so shall He change ill,
When the world as a wither'd leaf shall be,
And the sky like a shrivell'd scroll shall flee,
And the souls shall be summon'd from land and sea,
At the blast of His bright archangel.

THORA'S SONG[1]

('ASHTAROTH')

WE severed in autumn early,
Ere the earth was torn by the plough;
The wheat and the oats and the barley
Are ripe for the harvest now.
We sunder'd one misty morning,
Ere the hills were dimm'd by the rain,
Through the flowers those hills adorning—
Thou comest not back again.

My heart is heavy and weary
With the weight of a weary soul;
The mid-day glare grows dreary,
And dreary the midnight scroll.

[1] Note 19, p. 381.

The corn-stalks sigh for the sickle,
'Neath the load of the golden grain;
I sigh for a mate more fickle—
Thou comest not back again.

The warm sun riseth and setteth,
The night bringeth moist'ning dew,
But the soul that longeth forgetteth
The warmth and the moisture, too;
In the hot sun rising and setting
There is naught save feverish pain;
There are tears in the night-dews wetting
Thou comest not back again.

Thy voice in mine ear still mingles
With the voices of whisp'ring trees;
Thy kiss on my cheek still tingles
At each kiss of the summer breeze;
While dreams of the past are thronging
For substance of shades in vain,
I am waiting, watching, and longing—
Thou comest not back again.

Waiting and watching ever,
Longing and lingering yet,
Leaves rustle and corn-stalks quiver,
Winds murmur and waters fret;
No answer they bring, no greeting,
No speech save that sad refrain,
No voice, save an echo repeating—
He cometh not back again.

THE THREE FRIENDS

(FROM THE FRENCH)

THE sword slew one in deadly strife;
  One perished by the bowl;
The third lies self-slain by the knife;
  For three the bells may toll—
I loved her better than my life,
  And better than my soul.

Aye, father! hast thou come at last?
  'Tis somewhat late to pray;
Life's crimson tides are ebbing fast,
  They drain my soul away;
Mine eyes with film are overcast,
  The lights are waning grey.

This curl from her bright head I shore,
  And this her hands gave mine;
See, one is stained with purple gore,
  And one with poison'd wine;
Give these to her when all is o'er—
  How serpent-like they twine!

We three were brethren in arms,
  And sworn companions we;
We held this motto, 'Whoso harms
  The one shall harm the three!'
Till, matchless for her subtle charms,
  Beloved of each was she.

(These two were slain that I might kiss
Her sweet mouth. I did well;
I said, 'There is no greater bliss
For those in heaven that dwell;'
I lost her; then I said, 'There is
No fiercer pang in hell!')

We have upheld each other's rights,
Shared purse, and borrow'd blade;
Have stricken side by side in fights;
And side by side have prayed
In churches. We were Christian knights,
And she a Christian maid.

We met at sunrise, he and I,
My comrade—'twas agreed
The steel our quarrel first should try,
The poison should succeed;
For two of three were doom'd to die,
And one was doomed to bleed.

We buckled to the doubtful fray,
At first, with some remorse;
But he who must be slain—or slay,
Soon strikes with vengeful force.
He fell; I left him where he lay,
Among the trampled gorse.

Did passion warp my heart and head
To madness? And, if so,
Can madness palliate bloodshed?—
It may be—I shall know
When God shall gather up the dead
From where the four winds blow.

We met at sunset, he and I—
My second comrade true;
Two cups with wine were brimming high,
And one was drugg'd—we knew
Not which, nor sought we to descry;
Our choice by lot we drew.

And there I sat with him to sup:
I heard him blithely speak
Of bygone days—the fatal cup
Forgotten seem'd—his cheek
Was ruddy: father, raise me up,
My voice is waxing weak.

We drank; his lips turned livid white
His cheeks grew leaden ash;
He reel'd—I heard his temples smite
The threshold with a crash!
And from his hand, in shivers bright,
I saw the goblet flash.

The morrow dawn'd with fragrance rare,
The May-breeze, from the west,
Just fann'd the sleepy olives, where
She heard and I confess'd;
My hair entangled with her hair,
Her breast strained to my breast.

On the dread verge of endless gloom
My soul recalls that hour;
Skies languishing with balm of bloom,
And fields aflame with flower;
And slow caresses that consume,
And kisses that devour.

Ah! now with storm the day seems rife,
My dull ears catch the roll
Of thunder, and the far sea strife,
On beach and bar and shoal—
I loved her better than my life,
And better than my soul.

She fled! I cannot prove her guilt,
Nor would I an I could;
See, life for life is fairly spilt!
And blood is shed for blood;
Her white hands neither touched the hilt,
Nor yet the potion brew'd.

Aye! turn me from the sickly south,
Towards the gusty north;
The fruits of sin are dust and drouth,
The end of crime is wrath—
The lips that pressed her rose-like mouth
Are choked with blood-red froth.

Then dig the grave-pit deep and wide,
Three graves thrown into one,
And lay three corpses side by side,
And tell their tale to none;
But bring her back in all her pride
To see what she hath done.

A SONG OF AUTUMN[1]

'WHERE shall we go for our garlands glad
  At the falling of the year,
When the burnt-up banks are yellow and sad,
  When the boughs are yellow and sere?
Where are the old ones that once we had,
  And when are the new ones near?
What shall we do for our garlands glad
  At the falling of the year?'

'Child! can I tell where the garlands go?
  Can I say where the lost leaves veer
On the brown-burnt banks, when the wild winds blow,
  When they drift through the dead-wood drear?
Girl! when the garlands of next year glow,
  You may gather again, my dear—
But *I* go where the last year's lost leaves go
  At the falling of the year.'

THE ROMANCE OF BRITOMARTE

AS RELATED BY SERGEANT LEIGH ON THE NIGHT HE GOT HIS CAPTAINCY AT THE RESTORATION

I'LL tell you a story: but pass the 'jack',
  And let us make merry to-night, my men.
Aye, those were the days when my beard was black—
  I like to remember them now and then—

[1] Note 20, p. 382

Then Miles was living, and Cuthbert there
On his lip was never a sign of down ;
But I carry about some braided hair,
That has not yet changed from the glossy brown
That it show'd the day when I broke the heart
Of the bravest of destriers, ' Britomarte.'

Sir Hugh was slain (may his soul find grace !)
In the fray that was neither lost nor won
At Edgehill—then to St. Hubert's Chase
Lord Goring dispatch'd a garrison—
But men and horses were ill to spare,
And ere long the soldiers were shifted fast.
As for me, I never was quartered there
Till Marston Moor had been lost ; at last,
As luck would have it, alone, and late
In the night, I rode to the northern gate.

I thought, as I pass'd through the moonlit park,
On the boyish days I used to spend
In the halls of the knight lying stiff and stark—
Thought on his lady, my father's friend
(Mine, too, in spite of my sinister bar,
But with that my story has naught to do)—
She died the winter before the war—
Died giving birth to the baby Hugh.
He pass'd ere the green leaves clothed the bough,
And the orphan girl was the heiress now.

When I was a rude and a reckless boy,
And she a brave and a beautiful child,
I was her page, her playmate, her toy—
I have crown'd her hair with the field-flowers wild

Cowslip and crowfoot and colt's-foot bright—
I have carried her miles when the woods were wet,
I have read her romances of dame and knight;
She was my princess, my pride, my pet.
There was then this proverb us twain between,
For the glory of God and of Gwendoline.

She had grown to a maiden wonderful fair,
But for years I had scarcely seen her face.
Now, with troopers Holdsworth, Huntly, and Clare,
Old Miles kept guard at St. Hubert's Chase,
And the chatelaine was a Mistress Ruth,
Sir Hugh's half-sister, an ancient dame,
But a mettlesome soul had she forsooth,
As she show'd when the time of her trial came.
I bore dispatches to Miles and to her
To warn them against the bands of Kerr.

And mine would have been a perilous ride
With the rebel horsemen—we knew not where
They were scattered over that country side,—
If it had not been for my brave brown mare.
She was iron-sinew'd and satin-skinn'd,
Ribb'd like a drum and limb'd like a deer,
Fierce as the fire and fleet as the wind—
There was nothing she couldn't climb or clear—
Rich lords had vex'd me, in vain, to part,
For their gold and silver, with Britomarte.

Next morn we muster'd scarce half a score
With the serving men, who were poorly arm'd
Five soldiers, counting myself, no more,
And a culverin, which might well have harm'd

Us, had we used it, but not our foes,
When, with horses and foot, to our doors they came,
And a psalm-singer summon'd us (through his nose),
And deliver'd—'This, in the people's name,
Unto whoso holdeth this fortress here,
Surrender! or bide the siege—John Kerr.'

'Twas a mansion built in a style too new,
A castle by courtesy, he lied
Who called it a fortress—yet, 'tis true,
It had been indifferently fortified—
We were well provided with bolt and bar—
And while I hurried to place our men,
Old Miles was call'd to a council of war
With Mistress Ruth and with *her*, and when
They had argued loudly and long, those three,
They sent, as a last resource, for me.

In the chair of state sat erect Dame Ruth;
She had cast aside her embroidery:
She had been a beauty, they say, in her youth,
There was much fierce fire in her bold black eye.
'Am I deceived in you both?' quoth she.
'If one spark of her father's spirit lives
In this girl here—so, this Leigh, Ralph Leigh,
Let us hear what counsel the springald gives.'
Then I stammer'd, somewhat taken aback—
(Simon, you ale-swiller, pass the 'jack').

The dame wax'd hotter—'Speak out, lad, say,
Must we fall in that canting caitiff's power?
Shall we yield to a knave and a turncoat? Nay,
I had liever leap from our topmost tower.

For a while we can surely await relief :
  Our walls are high and our doors are strong.'
This Kerr was indeed a canting thief—
  I know not rightly, some private wrong
He had done Sir Hugh, but I know this much,
Traitor or turncoat he suffer'd as such.

Quoth Miles—' Enough ! your will shall be done ;
  Relief may arrive by the merest chance,
But your house ere dusk will be lost and won ;
  They have got three pieces of ordnance.'
Then I cried, ' Lord Guy, with four troops of horse,
  Even now is biding at Westbrooke town ;
If a rider could break through the rebel force
  He would bring relief ere the sun goes down
Through the postern door could I make one dart
I could baffle them all upon Britomarte.'

Miles mutter'd ' Madness !' Dame Ruth look'd grave,
  Said, ' True, though we cannot keep one hour
The courtyard, no, nor the stables save,
  They will have to batter piecemeal the tower,
And thus——' But suddenly she halted there.
  With a shining hand on my shoulder laid,
Stood Gwendoline. She had left her chair,
  And, ' Nay, if it needs must be done,' she said,
' Ralph Leigh will gladly do it, I ween,
For the glory of God and of Gwendoline.'

I had undertaken a heavier task
  For a lighter word. I saddled with care,
Nor cumber'd myself with corselet nor casque
  (Being loth to burden the brave brown mare).

Young Clare kept watch on the wall—he cried,
'Now, haste, Ralph! this is the time to seize;
The rebels are round us on every side,
But here they straggle by twos and threes.'
Then out I led her, and up I sprung,
And the postern door on its hinges swung.

I had drawn this sword—you may draw it and feel,
For this is the blade that I bore that day—
There's a notch even now on the long grey steel,
A nick that has never been rasp'd away.
I bow'd my head and I buried my spurs,
One bound brought the gliding green beneath;
I could tell by her back-flung, flatten'd ears
She had fairly taken the bit in her teeth—
(What, Jack, have you drain'd your namesake dry,
Left nothing to quench the thirst of a fly?)

These things are done, and are done with, lad,
In far less time than your talker tells.
The sward with their hoof-strokes shook like mad,
And rang with their carbines and petronels;
And they shouted, 'Cross him and cut him off,'
'Surround him,' 'Seize him,' 'Capture the clown,
Or kill him,' 'Shall he escape to scoff
In your faces?' 'Shoot him or cut him down.'
And their bullets whistled on every side:
Many were near us and more were wide.

Not a bullet told upon Britomarte;
Suddenly snorting, she launched along;
So the osprey dives where the seagulls dart,
So the falcon swoops where the kestrels throng;

And full in my front one pistol flash'd,
And right in my path their sergeant got.
How our jack-boots jarr'd, how our stirrups clash'd,
While the mare like a meteor past him shot;
But I clove his skull with a backstroke clean,
For the glory of God and of Gwendoline.

And as one whom the fierce wind storms in the face
With spikes of hail and with splinters of rain,
I, while we fled through St. Hubert's Chase,
Bent till my cheek was amongst her mane.
To the north full a league of the deer-park lay,
Smooth, springy turf, and she fairly flew,
And the sound of their hoof-strokes died away,
And their far shots faint in the distance grew
Loudly I laughed, having won the start,
At the folly of following Britomarte.

They had posted a guard at the northern gate—
Some dozen of pikemen and musketeers.
To the tall park palings I turn'd her straight;
She veer'd in her flight as the swallow veers.
And some blew matches and some drew swords,
And one of them wildly hurl'd his pike,
But she clear'd by inches the oaken boards,
And she carried me yards beyond the dyke;
Then gaily over the long green down
We gallop'd, heading for Westbrooke town.

The green down slopes to the great grey moor,
The grey moor sinks to the gleaming Skelt—
Sudden and sullen, and swift and sure,
The whirling water was round my belt.

She breasted the bank with a savage snort,
And a backward glance of her bloodshot eye,
And ' Our Lady of Andover's ' flash'd like thought,
And flitted St. Agatha's nunnery,
And the firs at The Ferngrove fled on the right,
And ' Falconer's Tower ' on the left took flight.

And over ' The Ravenswold ' we raced—
We rounded the hill by ' The Hermit's Well '—
We burst on the Westbrooke Bridge—' What haste ?
What errand ? ' shouted the sentinel.
' To Beelzebub with the Brewer's knave ! '
' *Carolus Rex* and he of the Rhine ! '
Galloping past him, I got and gave
In the gallop password and countersign,
All soak'd with water and soil'd with mud,
With the sleeve of my jerkin half drench'd in blood.

Now, Heaven be praised that I found him there—
Lord Guy. He said, having heard my tale,
' Leigh, let my own man look to your mare,
Rest and recruit with our wine and ale ;
But first must our surgeon attend to you ;
You are somewhat shrewdly stricken, no doubt.'
Then he snatched a horn from the wall and blew,
Making ' Boot and Saddle ' ring sharply out.
' Have I done good service this day ? ' quoth I.
' Then I will ride back in your troop, Lord Guy.'

In the street I heard how the trumpets peal'd,
And I caught the gleam of a morion
From the window—then to the door I reel'd ;
I had lost more blood than I reckon'd upon ;

He eyed me calmly with keen grey eyes—
  Stern grey eyes of a steel-blue grey—
Said, 'The wilful man can never be wise,
  Nathless the wilful must have his way,'
And he pour'd from a flagon some fiery wine,
I drain'd it, and straightway strength was mine.

. . . . . .

I was with them all the way on the brown—
  'Guy to the rescue!' 'God and the king!'
We were just in time, for the doors were down;
  And didn't our sword-blades rasp and ring,
And didn't we hew and didn't we hack?
  The sport scarce lasted minutes ten—
(Aye, those were the days when my beard was black;
  I like to remember them now and then).
Though they fought like fiends, we were four to one,
And we captured those that refused to run.

We have not forgotten it, Cuthbert, boy!
  That supper scene when the lamps were lit;
How the women (some of them) sobb'd for joy,
  How the soldiers drank the deeper for it;
How the dame did honours, and Gwendoline,
  How grandly she glided into the hall,
How she stoop'd with the grace of a girlish queen,
  And kiss'd me gravely before them all;
And the stern Lord Guy, how gaily he laugh'd,
Till more of his cup was spilt than quaff'd.

Brown Britomarte lay dead in her straw
  Next morn—we buried her—brave old girl!
John Kerr, we tried him by martial law,
  And we twisted some hemp for the trait'rous churl;

And she—I met her alone—said she,
'You have risk'd your life, you have lost your mare,
And what can I give in return, Ralph Leigh?'
I replied, 'One braid of that bright brown hair.'
And with that she bow'd her beautiful head,
'You can take as much as you choose,' she said.

And I took it—it may be, more than enough—
And I shore it rudely, close to the roots.
The wine or wounds may have made me rough,
And men at the bottom are merely brutes.
Three weeks I slept at St. Hubert's Chase;
When I woke from the fever of wounds and wine
I could scarce believe that the ghastly face
That the glass reflected was really mine.
I sought the hall—where a wedding *had been*—
The wedding of Guy and of Gwendoline.

The romance of a grizzled old trooper's life
May make you laugh in your sleeves: laugh out,
Lads; we have most of us seen some strife;
We have all of us had some sport, no doubt.
I have won some honour and gain'd some gold,
Now that our king returns to his own;
If the pulses beat slow, if the blood runs cold,
And if friends have faded and loves have flown,
Then the greater reason is ours to drink,
And the more we swallow the less we shall think.

At the battle of Naseby, Miles was slain,
And Huntly sank from his wounds that week;
We left young Clare upon Worcester plain—
How the 'Ironside' gash'd his girlish cheek.

Aye, strut, and swagger, and ruffle anew,
Gay gallants, now that the war is done!
They fought like fiends (give the fiend his due)—
We fought like fops, it was thus they won.
Holdsworth is living for aught I know,
At least he was living two years ago.

And Guy—Lord Guy—so stately and stern,
He is changed, I met him at Winchester;
He has grown quite gloomy and taciturn.
Gwendoline!—why do you ask for her?
Died! as her mother had died before—
Died giving birth to the baby Guy!
Did my voice shake? Then am I fool the more.
Sooner or later we all must die;
But, at least, let us live while we live to-night.
The *days* may be dark, but the *lamps* are bright.

For to me the sunlight seems worn and wan:
The sun, he is losing his splendour now—
He can never shine as of old he shone
On her glorious hair and glittering brow.
Ah! those *days that were*, when my beard was black,
Now I have only the *nights that are*.
What, landlord, ho! bring in haste burnt sack,
And a flask of your fiercest usquebaugh.
You, Cuthbert! surely you know by heart
The story of *her* and of Britomarte.

LAUDAMUS[1]

THE Lord shall slay or the Lord shall save!
He is righteous whether He save or slay—
Brother! give thanks for the gifts He gave,
Though the gifts He gave He hath taken away.
Shall we strive for that which is nothing? Nay.
Shall we hate each other for that which fled?
She is but a marvel of modelled clay,
And the smooth, clear white, and the soft, pure red
That we coveted, shall endure no day.

Was it wise or well that I hated you
For the fruit that hung too high on the tree?
For the blossom out of our reach that grew
Was it well or wise that you hated me?—
My hate has flown and your hate shall flee.
Let us veil our faces like children chid—
Can that violet orb we swore by see
Through that violet-vein'd, transparent lid?—
Now the Lord forbid that this strife should be.

Would you knit the forehead or clench the fist,
For the curls that never were well caress'd—
For the red that never was fairly kiss'd—
For the white that never was fondly press'd?
Shall we nourish wrath while she lies at rest

[1] Note 21, p. 382.

Between us ? Surely our wrath shall cease.
We would fain know better—the Lord knows best—
Is there peace between us ? Yea, there is peace,
In the soul's release she at least is blest.

Let us thank the Lord for His bounties all,
For the brave old days of pleasure and pain,
When the world for both of us seem'd too small—
Though the love was void and the hate was vain—
Though the word was bitter between us twain,
And the bitter word was kin to the blow,
For her gloss and ripple of rich gold rain,
For her velvet crimson and satin snow—
Though we never shall know the old days again.

The Lord !—His mercy is great, men say ;
His wrath, men say, is a burning brand—
Let us praise Him, whether He save or slay,
And above her body let hand join hand.
We shall meet, my friend, in the spirit land—
Will our strife renew ? Nay, I dare not trust,
For the grim, great gulf that cannot be spann'd
Will divide us from her. The Lord is just,
She shall not be thrust where our spirits stand.

A BASKET OF FLOWERS

FROM DAWN TO DUSK

DAWN

On skies still and starlit
White lustres take hold,
And grey flushes scarlet,
And red flashes gold.

And sun-glories cover
The rose, shed above her,
Like lover and lover
They flame and unfold.

. . . .

Still bloom in the garden
Green grass-plot, fresh lawn,
Though pasture lands harden
And drought fissures yawn.
While leaves not a few fall,
Let rose-leaves for you fall
Leaves pearl-strung with dew-fall,
And gold shot with dawn.

Does the grass-plot remember
The fall of your feet
In Autumn's red ember
When drought leagues with heat.
When the last of the roses
Despairingly closes
In the lull that reposes
Ere storm winds wax fleet ?

Love's melodies languish
In 'Chastelard's' strain,
And 'Abelard's' anguish
Is love's pleasant pain !
And 'Sappho' rehearses
Love's blessings and curses
In passionate verses
Again and again.

And I !—I have heard of
All these long ago,
Yet never one word of
Their song-lore I know ;
Not under my finger
In songs of the singer
Love's litanies linger,
Love's rhapsodies flow.

Fresh flowers in a basket—
An offering to you—
Though you did not ask it,
Unbidden I strew ;
With heat and drought striving
Some blossoms still living
May render thanksgiving
For dawn and for dew.

The garlands I gather,
The rhymes I string fast,
Are hurriedly rather
Than heedlessly cast.
Yon tree's shady awning
Is short'ning, and warning,
Far spent is the morning,
And I must ride fast.

Songs empty, yet airy,
I 've striven to write,
For failure, dear Mary !
Forgive me—Good-night !

Songs and flowers may beset you,
I can only regret you,
While the soil where I met you
  Recedes from my sight.

For the sake of past hours,
  For the love of old times,
Take 'A Basket of Flowers,'
  And a bundle of rhymes;
Though all the bloom perish
E'en *your* hand can cherish,
While churlish and bearish
  The verse-jingle chimes.

And Eastward by Nor'ward
  Looms sadly *my* track,
And I must ride forward,
  And still I look back,—
Look back—Ah, how vainly!
For while I see plainly,
My hands on the reins lie
  Uncertain and slack.

The warm wind breathes strong breath,
  The dust dims mine eye,
And I draw one long breath,
  And stifle one sigh.
Green slopes softly shaded,
Have flitted and faded—
My dreams flit as they did—
  Good-night!—and—Good-bye!

. . . . .

DUSK

Lost rose! end my story!
  Dead core and dry husk—
Departed thy glory
  And tainted thy musk.
Night spreads her dark limbs on
The face of the dim sun,
So flame fades to crimson
  And crimson to dusk.

End of Bush Ballads

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

TO MY SISTER[1]

LINES WRITTEN BY THE LATE A. L. GORDON

ON AUGUST 4, 1853

Being three days before he sailed for Australia

ACROSS the trackless seas I go,
No matter when or where,
And few my future lot will know,
And fewer still will care.
My hopes are gone, my time is spent,
I little heed their loss,
And if I cannot feel content,
I cannot feel remorse.

My parents bid me cross the flood,
My kindred frowned at me;
They say I have belied my blood,
And stained my pedigree.
But I must turn from those who chide,
And laugh at those who frown;
I cannot quench my stubborn pride,
Nor keep my spirits down.

I once had talents fit to win
Success in life's career,
And if I chose a part of sin,
My choice has cost me dear.

[1] Note 22 a, p. 383.

But those who brand me with disgrace
  Will scarcely dare to say
They spoke the taunt before my face,
  And went unscathed away.

My friends will miss a comrade's face,
  And pledge me on the seas,
Who shared the wine-cup or the chase,
  Or follies worse than these.
A careless smile, a parting glass,
  A hand that waves adieu,
And from my sight they soon will pass,
  And from my memory too.

I loved a girl not long ago,[1]
  And, till my suit was told,
I thought her breast as fair as snow,
  'Twas very near as cold;
And yet I spoke, with feelings more
  Of recklessness than pain,
Those words I never spoke before,
  Nor never shall again.

Her cheek grew pale, in her dark eye
  I saw the tear-drop shine;
Her red lips faltered in reply,
  And then were pressed to mine,
A quick pulsation of the heart!
  A flutter of the breath!
A smothered sob—and thus we part,
  To meet no more till death.

[1] Note 22 b, p. 383.

And yet I may at times recall
Her memory with a sigh;
At times for me the tears may fall
And dim her sparkling eye.
But absent friends are soon forgot,
And in a year or less
'Twill doubtless be another's lot
Those very lips to press!

With adverse fate we best can cope
When all we prize has fled;
And where there 's little left to hope,
There 's little left to dread!
Oh, time glides ever quickly by!
Destroying all that 's dear;
On earth there 's little worth a sigh,
And nothing worth a tear!

What fears have I? What hopes in life?
What joys can I command?
A few short years of toil and strife
In a strange and distant land!
When green grass sprouts above this clay
(And that might be ere long),
Some friends may read these lines and say,
The world has judged him wrong.

There is a spot not far away
Where my young sister sleeps,
Who seems alive but yesterday,
So fresh her memory keeps;

For we have played in childhood there
Beneath the hawthorn's bough,
And bent our knee in childish prayer
I cannot utter now!

Of late so reckless and so wild,
That spot recalls to me
That I was once a laughing child,
As innocent as she;
And there, while August's wild flow'rs wave,
I wandered all alone,
Strewed blossoms on her little grave,
And knelt beside the stone.

I seem to have a load to bear,
A heavy, choking grief;
Could I have forced a single tear
I might have felt relief.
I think my hot and restless heart
Has scorched the channels dry
From which those sighs of sorrow start
To moisten cheek and eye.

Sister, farewell! farewell once more
To every youthful tie!
Friends! parents! kinsmen! native shore!
To each and all good-bye!
And thoughts which for the moment seem
To bind me with a spell,
Ambitious hope! love's boyish dream!
To you a last farewell!

'THE OLD LEAVEN'[1]

A DIALOGUE

Mark:

So, Maurice, you sail to-morrow, you say?
And you may or may not return?
Be sociable, man, for once in a way,
Unless you're too old to learn.
The shadows are cool by the water side
Where the willows grow by the pond,
And the yellow laburnum's drooping pride
Sheds a golden gleam beyond.
For the blended tints of the summer flowers,
For the scents of the summer air,
For all nature's charms in this world of ours,
'Tis little or naught you care.
Yet I know for certain you haven't stirred
Since noon from your chosen spot;
And you've hardly spoken a single word—
Are you tired, or cross, or what?
You're fretting about those shares you bought,
They were to have gone up fast;
But I heard how they fell to nothing—in short,
They were given away at last.

Maurice:

No, Mark, I'm not so easily cross'd;
'Tis true that I've had a run
Of bad luck lately; indeed, I've lost!
Well! somebody else has won.

[1] Note 23, p. 384.

Mark:

The glass has fallen, perhaps you fear
A return of your ancient stitch—
That souvenir of the Lady's Mere,
Park palings and double ditch.

Maurice:

You're wrong. I'm not in the least afraid
Of that. If the truth be told,
When the stiffness visits my shoulder-blade,
I think on the days of old;
It recalls the rush of the freshening wind,
The strain of the chestnut springing,
And the rolling thunder of hoofs behind,
Like the Rataplan chorus ringing.

Mark:

Are you bound to borrow, or loth to lend?
Have you purchased another screw?
Or backed a bill for another friend?
Or had a bad night at loo?

Maurice:

Not one of those, you're all in the dark,
If you choose you can guess again;
But you'd better give over guessing, Mark,
It 's only labour in vain.

Mark:

I'll try once more; does it plague you still,
That trifle of lead you carry?
A guest that lingers against your will,
Unwelcome, yet bound to tarry.

Maurice :

Not so ! That burden I'm used to bear,
'Tis seldom it gives me trouble ;
And to earn it as I did then and there,
I'd carry a dead weight double.
A shock like that for a splintered rib
Can a thousand-fold repay—
As the swallow skims through the spider's web,
We rode through their ranks that day !

Mark :

Come, Maurice, you shan't escape me so !
I'll hazard another guess :
That girl that jilted you long ago,
You're thinking of her, confess !

Maurice :

Tho' the blue lake flush'd with a rosy light,
Reflected from yonder sky,
Might conjure a vision of Aphrodite
To a poet's or painter's eye ;
Tho' the golden drop, with its drooping curl,
Between the water and wood,
Hangs down like the tress of a wayward girl
In her dreamy maidenhood :
Such boyish fancies seem out of date
To one half inclined to censure
Their folly, and yet—your shaft flew straight,
Though you drew your bow at a venture.
I saw my lady the other night
In the crowded opera hall,
When the boxes sparkled with faces bright,
I knew her amongst them all.

Tho' little for these things now I reck,
I singled her from the throng
By the queenly curves of her head and neck,
By the droop of her eyelash long.
Oh! passionless, placid, and calm, and cold,
Does the fire still lurk within
That lit her magnificent eyes of old,
And coloured her marble skin?
For a weary look on the proud face hung,
While the music clash'd and swell'd,
And the restless child to the silk skirt clung,
Unnoticed tho' unrepelled.
They've paled, those rosebud lips that I kist,
That slim waist has thickened rather,
And the cub has the sprawling mutton fist,
And the great splay foot of the father.
May the blight——

Mark:
Hold hard there, Maurice, my son,
Let her rest, since her spell is broken;
We can neither recall deeds rashly done,
Nor retract words hastily spoken.

Maurice:
Time was when to pleasure her girlish whim,
In my blind infatuation,
I've freely endangered life and limb;
Aye, perilled my soul's salvation.

Mark:
With the best intentions we all must work
But little good and much harm;

Be a Christian for once, not a Pagan Turk,
Nursing wrath and keeping it warm.

Maurice :

If our best intentions pave the way
To a place that is somewhat hot,
Can our worst intentions lead us, say,
To a still more sultry spot ?

Mark :

'Tis said that charity makes amends
For a multitude of transgressions.

Maurice :

But our perjured loves and our faithless friends
Are entitled to no concessions.

Mark :

Old man, these many years side by side
Our parallel paths have lain ;
Now, in life's long journey, diverging wide,
They can scarcely unite again ;
And tho', from all that I've seen and heard,
You're prone to chafe and to fret
At the least restraint, not one angry word
Have we two exchanged as yet.
We've shared our peril, we've shared our sport,
Our sunshine and gloomy weather,
Feasted and flirted, and fenced and fought,
Struggled and toiled together ;
In happier moments, lighter of heart,
Stouter of heart in sorrow ;

We've met and we've parted, and now we part
For ever, perchance, to-morrow.
She 's a matron now ; when you knew her first
She was but a child, and your hate,
Fostered and cherished, nourished and nursed,
Will it never evaporate ?
Your grievance is known to yourself alone,
But, Maurice, I say, for shame,
If in ten long years you haven't outgrown
Ill-will to an ancient flame.

Maurice :

Well, Mark, you're right ; if I spoke in spite,
Let the shame and the blame be mine ;
At the risk of a headache we'll drain this night
Her health in a flask of wine ;
For a castle in Spain, tho' it never was built ;
For a dream, tho' it never came true ;
For a cup, just tasted, tho' rudely spilt,
At least she can hold me due.
Those hours of pleasure she dealt of yore,
As well as those hours of pain,
I ween they would flit as they flitted before,
If I had them over again.
Against her no word from my lips shall pass,
Betraying the grudge I've cherished,
Till the sand runs down in my hour-glass,
And the gift of my speech has perished.
Say ! why is the spirit of peace so weak,
And the spirit of wrath so strong,
That the right we must steadily search and seek,
Tho' we readily find the wrong ?

Mark :

Our parents of old entailed the curse
Which must to our children cling ;
Let us hope, at least, that we're not much worse
Than the founder from whom we spring.
Fit sire was he of a selfish race,
Who first to temptation yielded,
Then to mend his case tried to heap disgrace
On the woman he should have shielded.
Say ! comrade mine, the forbidden fruit
We'd have plucked, that I well believe,
But I trust we'd rather have suffered mute
Than have laid the blame upon Eve.

Maurice (*yawning*) *:*

Who knows ? not I ; I can hardly vouch
For the truth of what little I see ;
And now, if you've any weed in your pouch,
Just hand it over to me.

AN EXILE'S FAREWELL[1]

The ocean heaves around us still
With long and measured swell,
The autumn gales our canvas fill,
Our ship rides smooth and well.
The broad Atlantic's bed of foam
Still breaks against our prow ;
I shed no tears at quitting home,
Nor will I shed them now !

[1] Note 24, p. 384.

Against the bulwarks on the poop
I lean, and watch the sun
Behind the red horizon stoop—
His race is nearly run.
Those waves will never quench his light,
O'er which they seem to close,
To-morrow he will rise as bright
As he this morning rose.

How brightly gleams the orb of day
Across the trackless sea!
How lightly dance the waves that play
Like dolphins in our lee!
The restless waters seem to say,
In smothered tones to me,
How many thousand miles away
My native land must be!

Speak, Ocean! is my Home the same,
Now all is new to me?—
The tropic sky's resplendent flame,
The vast expanse of sea?
Does all around her, yet unchanged,
The well-known aspect wear?
Oh! can the leagues that I have ranged
Have made no difference there?

How vivid Recollection's hand
Recalls the scene once more!
I see the same tall poplars stand
Beside the garden door;

I see the bird-cage hanging still;
And where my sister set
The flowers in the window-sill—
Can they be living yet?

Let woman's nature cherish grief,
I rarely heave a sigh
Before emotion takes relief
In listless apathy;
While from my pipe the vapours curl
Towards the evening sky,
And 'neath my feet the billows whirl
In dull monotony!

The sky still wears the crimson streak
Of Sol's departing ray,
Some briny drops are on my cheek,
'Tis but the salt sea spray!
Then let our barque the ocean roam,
Our keel the billows plough;
I shed no tears at quitting home,
Nor will I shed them now!

'EARLY ADIEUX'

Adieu to kindred hearts and home,
To pleasure, joy, and mirth,
A fitter foot than mine to roam
Could scarcely tread the earth;

For they are now so few indeed
(Not more than three in all),
Who e'er will think of me or heed
What fate may me befall.

For I through pleasure's paths have run
My headlong goal to win,
Nor pleasure's snares have cared to shun
When pleasure sweetened sin.
Let those who will their failings mask,
To mine I frankly own;
But for them pardon will I ask
Of none—save Heaven alone.

From carping friends I turn aside;
At foes defiance frown;
Yet time may tame my stubborn pride,
And break my spirit down.
Still, if to error I incline,
Truth whispers comfort strong,
That never reckless act of mine
E'er worked a comrade wrong.

My mother is a stately dame,
Who oft would chide with me;
She saith my riot bringeth shame,
And stains my pedigree.
I'd reck not what my friends might know,
Or what the world might say,
Did I but think some tears would flow
When I am far away.

Perchance my mother will recall
My mem'ry with a sigh;
My gentle sister's tears may fall,
And dim her laughing eye;
Perhaps a loving thought may gleam,
And fringe its saddened ray,
When, like a nightmare's troubled dream,
I, outcast, pass away.

Then once again farewell to those
Who e'er for me have sighed;
For pleasures melt away like snows,
And hopes like shadows glide.
Adieu, my mother! if no more
Thy son's face thou may'st see,
At least those many cares are o'er
So ofttimes caused by me.

My lot is fixed! The die is cast!
For me home hath no joy!
Oh, pardon then all follies past,
And bless your wayward boy!
And thou, from whom for aye to part
Grieves more than tongue can tell,
May Heaven preserve thy guileless heart!
Sweet sister, fare thee well!

Thou, too, whose loving-kindness makes
My resolution less,
While from the bitter past it takes
One half its bitterness,

If e'er you held my mem'ry dear,
Grant this request, I pray—
Give to that mem'ry one bright tear,
And let it pass away.

A HUNTING SONG[1]

HERE 's a health to every sportsman, be he stableman or lord,
If his heart be true, I care not what his pocket may afford ;
And may he ever pleasantly each gallant sport pursue,
If he takes his liquor fairly, and his fences fairly, too.

He cares not for the bubbles of Fortune's fickle tide,
Who like Bendigo can battle, and like Olliver can ride.
He laughs at those who caution, at those who chide he'll frown,
As he clears a five-foot paling, or he knocks a peeler down.

The dull, cold world may blame us, boys ! but what care we the while,
If coral lips will cheer us, and bright eyes on us smile ?
For beauty's fond caresses can most tenderly repay
The weariness and trouble of many an anxious day.

Then fill your glass, and drain it, too, with all your heart and soul,
To the best of sports—The Fox-hunt, The Fair Ones, and The Bowl,

[1] Note 25, p. 384.

To a stout heart in adversity through every ill to steer,
And when Fortune smiles, a score of friends like those around us here.

TO A PROUD BEAUTY

'A Valentine'

Though I have loved you well, I ween,
And you, too, fancied me,
Your heart hath too divided been
A constant heart to be.
And like the gay and youthful knight,
Who loved and rode away,
Your fleeting fancy takes a flight
With every fleeting day.

So let it be as you propose,
Tho' hard the struggle be;
'Tis fitter far—that goodness knows!—
Since we cannot agree.
Let's quarrel once for all, my sweet,
Forget the past—and then
I'll kiss each pretty girl I meet,
While you'll flirt with the men.

THICK-HEADED THOUGHTS

No. I

I've something of the bull-dog in my breed,
The spaniel is developed somewhat less;
While life is in me I can fight and bleed,
But never the chastising hand caress.

You say the stroke was well intended. 'True.'
You mention 'It was meant to do me good'.
'That may be.' 'You deserve it.' 'Granted, too.'
'Then take it kindly.' 'No—I never could.'

. . . . . .

How many a resolution to amend
Is made and broken, as the years run round!
And how can others on your word depend,
When faithless to ourselves we're often found?
I've often swore—'Henceforward I'll reform,
And bid my vices, follies, all take wing.'
To keep my promise, 'mid temptation's storm,
I've always found was quite another thing.

. . . . . .

I saw a donkey going down the road
The other day; a boy was on his back,
Who on the long-eared quadruped bestowed,
With a stout cudgel, many a hearty thwack;
But lazier and lazier grew the beast,
Until he dwindled to a step so slow
That I felt sure 'twould take him, at the least,
Full half an hour one blessed mile to go.

Soliloquising on this state of things,
'That moke's like me,' I muttered, with a sigh;
'He might go faster if he'd got some wings,
But Nature's made him better off than I;
For though I've all his obstinacy—aye! all—
His sullen spirit, and his dogged ways,
I've not one particle, however small,
Of that praiseworthy patience he displays.'

No. II

A MAN is independent of the world,
And little recks of strife or angry brawl,
If 'gainst a host his banner be unfurled,
Be his heart stout, it matters not at all.
With woman 'tis not so; for she seems hurled
From hand to hand, as is a tennis ball.
How queer that such a difference should be
Between a human he and human she.

No. III

'TIS a wicked world we live in;
Wrong in reason, wrong in rhyme;
But no matter: we'll not give in
While we still can come to time.

Strength 's a shadow; Hope is madness;
Love, delusion; Friendship, sham;
Pleasure fades away to sadness,
None of these are worth a d——n.

There is naught on earth to please us;
All things at the crisis fail.
Friends desert us, bailiffs tease us—
(To such foes we give leg-bail).

But a stout heart still maintaining,
Quells the ills we all must meet,
And a spirit fear disdaining
Lays our troubles at our feet.

So we'll ne'er surrender tamely
To the ills that throng us fast.
If we must die, let's die gamely;
Luck may take a turn at last.

ASHTAROTH; A DRAMATIC LYRIC

ASHTAROTH; A DRAMATIC LYRIC

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HUGO, *a Norman Baron and a Scholar.*
ERIC, *a friend of Hugo's.*
THURSTON, EUSTACE, RALPH, } *Followers of Hugo.*
HENRY, *a Page.*
LUKE, HUBERT, } *Monks living in a Norman Chapel.*
BASIL, *Abbot of a Convent on the Rhine.*
CYRIL, *a Monk of the same Convent.*
OSRIC, *a Norwegian Adventurer, and formerly a Corsair.*
RUDOLPH, *an Outlawed Count, and the Captain of a Band of Robbers.*
DAGOBERT, *the Captain of some predatory Soldiers called 'Free Lances.'*
HAROLD, *a Danish Knight.*
ORION.
THORA,
AGATHA,
ELSPETH, *a Nurse of Thora's,*
URSULA, *Abbess of the Convent on the Rhine,*
NUNS, ETC., } WOMEN.

Men-at-arms, Soldiers, and Robbers; Monks, Friars, and Churchmen; Spirits, etc.

ASHTAROTH; A DRAMATIC LYRIC[1]

SCENE—A CASTLE IN NORMANDY

A Study in a Tower; HUGO *seated at a table covered with maps and charts of the heavens, astronomical instruments, books, manuscripts, &c.*

Enter HENRY, *a Page.*

Hugo:

Well, boy, what is it?

Henry: The feast is spread.

Hugo:

Why tarry the guests for me?
Let Eric sit at the table's head;
Alone I desire to be. [*Henry goes out.*
What share have I at their festive board?
Their mirth I can only mar;
To me no pleasure their cups afford,
Their songs on my silence jar.
With an aching eye and a throbbing brain,
And yet with a hopeful heart,
I must toil and strain with the planets again
When the rays of the sun depart;
He who must needs with the topers tope,
And the feasters feast in the hall,
How can he hope with a matter to cope
That is immaterial?

[1] Note 26, p. 384.

Orion :

He who his appetite stints and curbs,
Shut up in the northern wing,
With his rye-bread flavoured with bitter herbs,
And his draught from the tasteless spring,
Good sooth, he is but a sorry clown.
There are some good things upon earth—
Pleasure and power and fair renown,
And wisdom of worldly worth ;
There is wisdom in follies that charm the sense,
In follies that light the eyes,
But the folly to wisdom that makes pretence
Is alone by the fool termed wise.

Hugo :

Thy speech, Orion, is somewhat rude ;
Perchance, having jeer'd and scoff'd
To thy fill, thou wilt curb thy jeering mood ;
I wot thou hast served me oft.
This plan of the skies seems fairly traced ;
What errors canst thou detect ?

Orion :

Nay, the constellations are misplaced,
And the satellites incorrect ;
Leave the plan to me ; you have time to seek
An hour of needful rest,
The night is young and the planets are weak :
See, the sun still reddens the west.

Hugo :

I fear I shall sleep too long.

Orion : If you do
It matters not much ; the sky
Is cloudy, the stars will be faint and few ;
Now, list to my lullaby.
[*Hugo reclines on a couch.*

(*Sings.*)
Still the darkling skies are red,
Though the day-god's course is run ;
Heavenly night-lamps overhead
Flash and twinkle one by one.
Idle dreamer—earth-born elf !
Vainly grasping heavenly things,
Wherefore weariest thou thyself
With thy vain imaginings ?

From the tree of knowledge first,
Since his parents pluck'd the fruit,
Man, with partial knowledge curs'd,
Of the tree still seeks the root ;
Musty volumes crowd thy shelf—
Which of these true knowledge brings ?
Wherefore weariest thou thyself
With thy vain imaginings ?

Will the stars from heaven descend ?
Can the earth-worm soar and rise ?
Can the mortal comprehend
Heaven's own hallow'd mysteries ?
Greed and glory, power and pelf—
These are won by clowns and kings ;
Wherefore weariest thou thyself
With thy vain imaginings ?

Sow and reap, and toil and spin ;
Eat and drink, and dream and die ;
Man may strive, yet never win,
And I laugh the while and cry—
Idle dreamer—earth-born elf !
Vainly grasping heavenly things,
Wherefore weariest thou thyself
With thy vain imaginings ?

He sleeps, and his sleep appears serene,
Whatever dreams it has brought him—
[*Looks at the plans.*
If he knows what those hieroglyphics mean,
He 's wiser than one who taught him.
Why does he number the Pole-star thus,
Or the Pleiades why combine ?
And what is he doing with Sirius,
In the devil's name or in mine ?
Man thinks, discarding the beaten track,
That the sins of his youth are slain,
When he seeks fresh sins, but he soon comes back
To his old pet sins again.

SCENE—THE SAME

HUGO *waking,* ORION *seated near him. Daybreak.*

Hugo :

Oh, weary spirit ! oh, cloudy eyes !
Oh, heavy and misty brain !
Yon riddle that lies 'twixt earth and skies,
Ye seek to explore in vain !

See, the east is grey ; put those scrolls away,
And hide them far from my sight ;
I will toil and study no more by day,
I will watch no longer by night ;
I have labour'd and long'd, and now I seem
No nearer the mystic goal ;
Orion, I fain would devise some scheme
To quiet this restless soul ;
To distant climes I would fain depart—
I would travel by sea or land.

Orion :

Nay, I warn'd you of this, ' Short life, long art,'
The proverb, though stale, will stand ;
Full many a sage from youth to age
Has toil'd to attain what you
Would master at once. In a pilgrimage,
Forsooth, there is nothing new ;
Though virtue, I ween, in change of scene,
And vigour in change of air,
Will always be, and has always been,
And travel is a tonic rare.
Still, the restless, discontented mood
For the time alone is eased ;
It will soon return with hunger renew'd,
And appetite unappeased.
Nathless I could teach a shorter plan
To win that wisdom you crave,
That lore that is seldom attain'd by man
From the cradle down to the grave.

Hugo :

Such lore I had rather do without,
It hath nothing mystic nor awful

In my eye. Nay, I despise and doubt
The arts that are term'd unlawful ;
'Twixt science and magic the line lies plain,
I shall never wittingly pass it ;
There is now no compact between us twain.

Orion : But an understanding tacit.
You have prosper'd much since the day we met ;
You were then a landless knight ;
You now have honour and wealth, and yet
I never can serve you right.

Hugo :
Enough ; we will start this very day,
Thurston, Eric, and I,
And the baffled visions will pass away,
And the restless fires will die.

Orion :
Till the fuel expires that feeds those fires,
They smoulder and live unspent ;
Give a mortal all that his heart desires,
He is less than ever content.

SCENE—A CLIFF ON THE BRETON COAST, OVERHANGING THE SEA

HUGO.

Hugo :
Down drops the red sun ; through the gloaming
They burst—raging waves of the sea,
Foaming out their own shame—ever foaming
Their leprosy up with fierce glee ;

Flung back from the stone, snowy fountains
Of feathery flakes, scarcely flag
Where, shock after shock, the green mountains
Explode on the iron-grey crag.

The salt spray with ceaseless commotion
Leaps round me. I sit on the verge
Of the cliff—'twixt the earth and the ocean—
With feet overhanging the surge.
In thy grandeur, oh, sea! we acknowledge,
In thy fairness, oh, earth! we confess,
Hidden truths that are taught in no college,
Hidden songs that no parchments express.

Were they wise in their own generations,
Those sages and sagas of old?
They have pass'd; o'er their names and their nations
Time's billows have silently roll'd;
They have pass'd, leaving little to their children,
Save histories of a truth far from strict;
Or theories more vague and bewildering,
Since three out of four contradict.

Lost labour! vain book-worms have sat in
The halls of dull pedants who teach
Strange tongues, the dead lore of the Latin,
The scroll that is god-like and Greek:
Have wasted life's springtide in learning
Things long ago learnt all in vain;
They are slow, very slow, in discerning
That book lore and wisdom are twain.

Pale shades of a creed that was mythic,
By time or by truth overcome,
Your Delphian temples and Pythic
Are ruins deserted and dumb;
Your Muses are hush'd, and your Graces
Are bruised and defaced; and your gods,
Enshrin'd and enthron'd in high places
No longer, are powerless as clods;

By forest and streamlet, where glisten'd
Fair feet of the Naiads that skimm'd
The shallows; where the Oreads listen'd,
Rose-lipp'd, amber-hair'd, marble-limb'd,
No lithe forms disport in the river,
No sweet faces peer through the boughs,
Elms and beeches wave silent for ever,
Ever silent the bright water flows.

(Were they duller or wiser than we are,
Those heathens of old? Who shall say?
Worse or better? Thy wisdom, oh 'Thea
Glaucopis,' was wise in thy day;
And the false gods alluring to evil,
That sway'd reckless votaries then,
Were slain to no purpose; they revel
Recrowned in the hearts of us men.)

Dead priests of Osiris, and Isis,
And Apis! that mystical lore,
Like a nightmare, conceived in a crisis
Of fever, is studied no more;

Dead Magian ! yon star-troop that spangles
The arch of yon firmament vast
Looks calm, like a host of white angels,
On dry dust of votaries past.

On seas unexplored can the ship shun
Sunk rocks ? Can man fathom life's links,
Past or future, unsolved by Egyptian
Or Theban, unspoken by Sphinx ?
The riddle remains still unravell'd
By students consuming night oil.
Oh, earth ! we have toil'd, we have travail'd :
How long shall we travail and toil ?

How long ? The short life that fools reckon
So sweet, by how much is it higher
Than brute life ?—the false gods still beckon,
And man, through the dust and the mire,
Toils onward, as toils the dull bullock,
Unreasoning, brutish, and blind,
With Ashtaroth, Mammon, and Moloch
In front, and Alecto behind.

The wise one of earth, the Chaldean,
Serves folly in wisdom's disguise ;
And the sensual Epicurean,
Though grosser, is hardly less wise ;
'Twixt the former, half pedant, half pagan,
And the latter, half sow and half sloth,
We halt, choose Astarte or Dagon,
Or sacrifice freely to both.

With our reason that seeks to disparage,
Brute instinct it fails to subdue ;
With our false illegitimate courage,
Our sophistry, vain and untrue ;
Our hopes, that ascend so and fall so,
Our passions, fierce hates and hot loves,
We are wise (aye, the snake is wise also)—
Wise as serpents, *not* harmless as doves.

Some flashes, like faint sparks from heaven,
Come rarely with rushing of wings ;
We are conscious at times we have striven,
Though seldom, to grasp better things ;
These pass, leaving hearts that have falter'd,
Good angels with faces estranged,
And the skin of the Ethiop unalter'd,
And the spots of the leopard unchanged.

Oh, earth ! pleasant earth ! have we hanker'd
To gather thy flowers and thy fruits ?
The roses are wither'd, and canker'd
The lilies, and barren the roots
Of the fig-tree, the vine, the wild olive,
Sharp thorns and sad thistles that yield
Fierce harvest—so *we* live, and *so* live
The perishing beasts of the field.

And withal we are conscious of evil
And good—of the spirit and the clod,
Of the power in our hearts of a devil,
Of the power in our souls of a God,

Whose commandments are graven in no cypher,
But clear as His sun—from our youth
One at least we have cherished—' An eye for
An eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'

Oh, man ! of thy Maker the image ;
To passion, to pride, or to wealth,
Sworn bondsman, from dull youth to dim age,
Thy portion the fire or the filth,
Dross seeking ; dead pleasure's death rattle
Thy memories' happiest song
And thy highest hope—scarce a drawn battle
With dark desperation. How long ?

. . . . .

Roar louder ! leap higher ! ye surf-beds,
And sprinkle your foam on the furze ;
Bring the dreams that brought sleep to our turf-beds,
To camps of our long ago years,
With the flashing and sparkling of broadswords,
With the tossing of banners and spears,
With the trampling of hard hoofs on hard swards,
With the mingling of trumpets and cheers.

. . . . .

The gale has gone down ; yet outlasting
The gale, raging waves of the sea,
Casting up their own foam, ever casting
Their leprosy up with wild glee,
Still storm ; so in rashness and rudeness
Man storms through the days of his grace ;
Yet man cannot fathom God's goodness,
Exceeding God's infinite space.

And coldly and calmly and purely
Grey rock and green hillock lie white
In star-shine dream-laden—so surely
Night cometh—so cometh the night
When we, too, at peace with our neighbour,
May sleep where God's hillocks are piled,
Thanking HIM for a rest from day's labour,
And a sleep like the sleep of a child !

SCENE—THE CASTLE IN NORMANDY

THORA *working at embroidery*, ELSPETH *spinning*.

Thora (*sings*) :

We severed in autumn early,
Ere the earth was torn by the plough ;
The wheat and the oats and the barley
Are ripe for the harvest now.
We sunder'd one misty morning,
Ere the hills were dimm'd by the rain ;
Through the flowers those hills adorning—
Thou comest not back again.

My heart is heavy and weary
With the weight of a weary soul ;
The mid-day glare grows dreary,
And dreary the midnight scroll.
The corn-stalks sigh for the sickle,
'Neath the load of the golden grain ;
I sigh for a mate more fickle—
Thou comest not back again.

The warm sun riseth and setteth,
The night bringeth moist'ning dew,
But the soul that longeth forgetteth
The warmth and the moisture, too ;
In the hot sun rising and setting
There is naught save feverish pain ;
There are tears in the night-dews wetting—
Thou comest not back again.

Thy voice in mine ear still mingles
With the voices of whisp'ring trees ;
Thy kiss on my cheek still tingles
At each kiss of the summer breeze ;
While dreams of the past are thronging
For substance of shades in vain,
I am waiting, watching, and longing—
Thou comest not back again.

Waiting and watching ever,
Longing and lingering yet,
Leaves rustle and corn-stalks quiver,
Winds murmur and waters fret ;
No answer they bring, no greeting,
No speech save that sad refrain,
No voice, save an echo repeating—
He cometh not back again.

Elspeth :

Thine eldest sister is wedded to Max ;
With Biorn, Hilda hath cast her lot.
If the husbands vanish'd, and left no tracks,
Would the wives have cause for sorrow, I wot ?

Thora :

How well I remember that dreary ride ;
How I sigh'd for the lands of ice and snow,
In the trackless wastes of the desert wide,
With the sun o'erhead and the sand below ;
'Neath the scanty shades of the feathery palms,
How I sigh'd for the forest of sheltering firs,
Whose shadows environ'd the Danish farms
Where I sang and sported in childish years.
On the fourteenth day of our pilgrimage
We stay'd at the foot of a sandhill high ;
Our fever'd thirst we could scarce assuage
At the brackish well that was nearly dry ;
And the hot sun rose, and the hot sun set,
And we rode all the day through a desert land,
And we camp'd where the lake and the river met,
On sedge and shingle and shining sand :
Enfolded in Hugo's cloak I slept,
Or watch'd the stars while I lay awake ;
And close to our feet the staghound crept,
And the horses were grazing beside the lake ;
Now we own castles and serving men,
Lands and revenues. What of that ?
Hugo the Norman was kinder then,
And happier was Thora of Armorat.

Elspeth :

Nay, I warn'd thee, with Norman sails unfurl'd
Above our heads, when we wished thee joy,
That men are the same all over the world ;
They will worship only the newest toy ;

Yet Hugo is kind and constant, too,
Though somewhat given to studies of late;
Biorn is sottish, and Max untrue,
And worse than thine is thy sisters' fate.
But a shadow darkens the chamber door.

Enter THURSTON.

Thurston:

'Tis I, Lady Thora; our lord is near.
My horse being fresher, I rode before;
Both he and Eric will soon be here.

Thora:

Good Thurston, give me your hand. You are
Most welcome. What has delayed you thus?

Thurston:

Both by sea and land we have travell'd far,
Yet little of note has happened to us—
We were wreck'd on the shores of Brittany,
Near the coast of Morbihan iron-bound;
The rocks were steep and the surf ran high,
Thy kinsman, Eric, was well nigh drown'd.
By a swarm of knaves we were next beset,
Who took us for corsairs; then released
By a Breton count, whose name I forget.
Now I go, by your leave, to tend my beast.
[*He goes out.*

Elspeth:

That man is rude and froward of speech:
My ears are good, though my sight grows dim.

Thora :

Thurston is faithful. Thou canst not teach
Courtly nor servile manners to him.

SCENE—THE CASTLE HALL

THURSTON, RALPH, EUSTACE, *and other followers of* HUGO, *seated at a long table.* HAROLD *seated apart.*

Thurston :

Who is that stranger, dark and tall,
On the wooden settle next to the wall—
Mountebank, pilgrim, or wandering bard ?

Eustace :

To define his calling is somewhat hard ;
Lady Thora has taken him by the hand
Because he has come from the Holy Land.
Pilgrims and palmers are all the rage
With her, since she shared in that pilgrimage
With Hugo. The stranger came yesterday,
And would have gone on, but she bade him stay.
Besides, he sings in the Danish tongue
The songs she has heard in her childhood sung.
That 's all I know of him, good or bad ;
In my own opinion he 's somewhat mad.
You must raise your voice if you speak with him,
And he answers as though his senses were dim.

Thurston (*to Harold*) *:*

Good-morrow, sir stranger.

Harold : Good-morrow, friend.

Thurston :

Where do you come from ? and whither wend ?

Harold :

I have travelled of late with the setting sun
At my back ; and as soon as my task is done
I purpose to turn my face to the north—
Yet we know not what a day may bring forth.

Thurston :

Indeed we don't.

(*To Eustace, aside*) Nay, I know him now
By that ugly scar that crosses his brow ;
And the less we say to him the better.
Your judgement is right to the very letter—
The man is mad.

Eustace : But harmless, I think ;
He eats but little, eschews strong drink,
And only speaks when spoken to first.

Thurston :

Harmless or not, he was once the worst
And bitterest foe Lord Hugo had ;
And yet his story is somewhat sad.

Eustace :

May I hear it ?

Thurston : Nay, I never reveal
What concerns me not. Our lord may conceal
Or divulge at pleasure his own affairs,—
Not even his comrade Eric shares

His secrets ; though Eric thinks him wise,
Which is more than I do, for I despise
That foolish science he learnt in Rome.
He dreams and mopes when he sits at home,
And now he 's not much better abroad ·
'Tis hard to follow so tame a lord.
'Twixt us two, he won't be worth a rush
If he will persist in his studies——

Eustace : Hush !
Ralph has persuaded our guest to sing.

Thurston :
I have known the day when his voice would ring
Till the rafters echoed.

Eustace : 'Tis pleasant still,
Though far too feeble this hall to fill.

Harold (sings) :

On the current, where the wide
Windings of the river
Eddy to the North Sea tide,
Shall I in my shallop glide,
As I have done at her sidé ?
Never ! never ! never !

In the forest, where the firs,
Pines and larches quiver
To the northern breeze that stirs,
Shall my lips be press'd to hers,
As they were in by-gone years ?
Never ! never ! never !

In the battle on the plain,
Where the lance-shafts shiver,
And the sword-strokes fall like rain,
Shall I bear her scarf again
As I have done?—not in vain—
Never! never! never!

In a fairer, brighter land,
Where the saints rest ever,
Shall I once more see her stand,
White, amidst a white-robed band,
Harp and palm-branch in her hand?
Never! never! never!

SCENE—THE SAME

EUSTACE, THURSTON, *and followers of* HUGO.
HAROLD.

Enter, by the hall door, HUGO, ERIC, *and* THORA.

Eustace (*and others, standing up*) *:*
Welcome, Lord Hugo!

Hugo :
Welcome or not,
Thanks for your greeting all.
Ha, Eustace! what complaints hast thou got?
What grievances to recall?

Eustace :
Count William came with a numerous band,
Ere the snows began to fall,
And slew a buck on your lordship's land,
Within a league of the wall.

Hugo :

Count William has done to us no more
Than we to him. In his vineyard
Last summer, or later may be, a boar
Was slaughter'd by Thurston's whinyard.

Thurston :

Aye, Hugo ! But William kept the buck,
I will wager marks a score,
Though the tale is new to me ; and, worse luck,
You made me give back the boar.

Harold (*advancing*) *:*

Lord Hugo !

Hugo : What ! Art thou living yet ?
I scarcely knew thee, Sir Dane !
And 'tis not so very long since we met.

Harold :

'Twill be long ere we meet again (*gives a letter*).
This letter was traced by one now dead
In the Holy Land ; and I
Must wait till his dying request is read,
And in his name ask the reply.

Thora (*aside*) *:*

Who is that stranger, Hugo ?

Hugo : By birth
He is a countryman of thine,
Thora. What writing is this on earth ?
I can scarce decipher a line.

Harold :
The pen in the clutch of death works ill.

Hugo :
Nay, I read now ; the letters run
More clearly.

Harold : Wilt grant the request ?

Hugo : I will.

Harold :
Enough ! Then my task is done.
(*He holds out his hand.*)
Hugo, I go to a far-off land,
Wilt thou say, 'God speed thee ! ' now ?

Hugo :
Sir Harold, I cannot take thy hand,
Because of my ancient vow.

Harold :
Farewell, then.

Thora : Friend, till the morning wait.
On so wild a night as this
Thou shalt not go from my husband's gate ;
The path thou wilt surely miss.

Harold :
I go. Kind lady, some future day
Thy care will requited be.

Thora :
Speak, Hugo, speak.

Hugo : He may go or stay,
It matters little to me.
[*Harold goes out.*

Thora :
Husband, that man is ill and weak ;
On foot he goes and alone
Through a barren moor in a night-storm bleak.

Eric :
Now, I wonder where he has gone !

Hugo :
Indeed, I have not the least idea ;
The man is certainly mad.
He wedded my sister, Dorothea,
And used her cruelly bad.
He was once my firmest and surest friend,
And once my deadliest foe ;
But hate and friendship both find their end—
Now I heed not where he may go.

SCENE—A CHAMBER IN THE CASTLE

HUGO, THORA, *and* ERIC.

Hugo :
That letter that came from Palestine,
By the hands of yon wandering Dane,
Will cost me a pilgrimage to the Rhine.

Thora :
Wilt thou travel so soon again ?

Hugo :
I can scarce refuse the dying request
Of my comrade, Baldwin, now ;

His bones are dust. May his soul find rest!
He once made a foolish vow,
That at Englemehr, 'neath the watchful care
Of the Abbess, his child should stay,
For a season at least. To escort her there
I must start at the break of day.

Thora:
Is it Agatha that goes, or Clare?

Hugo:
Nay, Clare is dwelling in Spain
With her spouse.

Thora: 'Tis Agatha. She is fair,
I am told; but giddy and vain.

Eric:
Some musty tales on my memory grow
Concerning Count Baldwin's vow;
Thou knew'st his daughter?

Hugo: Aye, years ago.
I should scarcely know her now.
It seems, when her father's vow was made,
She was taken sorely ill;
Then he travell'd, and on his return was stay'd;
He could never his oath fulfil.

Eric:
If rightly I've heard, 'twas Agatha
That fled with some Danish knight—
I forget the name.

Hugo : Nay, she fled not far ;
She returned again that night.

Thora :
For a nun, I fear, she is too self-willed.

Hugo :
That is no affair of mine.
My task is over, my word fulfilled,
Should I bring her safe to the Rhine.
Come, Thora, sing.

Thora : Nay, I cannot sing;
Nor would I now if I could.
Sing thou.

Hugo : I will, though my voice should bring
No sound save a discord rude.

(*Sings.*)
Where the storm in its wrath hath lighted,
The pine lies low in the dust ;
And the corn is withered and blighted.
Where the fields are red with the rust ;
Falls the black frost, nipping and killing,
Where its petals the violet rears,
And the wind, though tempered, is chilling
To the lamb despoiled by the shears.

The strong in their strength are shaken,
The wise in their wisdom fall ;
And the bloom of beauty is taken—
Strength, wisdom, beauty, and all ;

They vanish, their lot fulfilling,
Their doom approaches and nears,
But the wind, though tempered, is chilling
To the lamb despoiled by the shears.

'Tis the will of a Great Creator,
He is wise, His will must be done,
And it cometh sooner or later;
And one shall be taken, and one
Shall be left here, toiling and tilling,
In this vale of sorrows and tears,
Where the wind, though tempered, is chilling
To the lamb despoiled by the shears.

Tell me, mine own one, tell me,
The shadows of life and the fears
Shall neither daunt me nor quell me,
While I can avert thy tears:
Dost thou shrink, as I shrink, unwilling
To realize lonely years?
Since the wind, though tempered, is chilling
To the lamb despoiled by the shears.

Enter HENRY.

Henry:
My lord, Father Luke craves audience straight,
He has come on foot from the chapel;
Some stranger perished beside his gate
When the dawn began to dapple.

SCENE—A CHAPEL NOT VERY FAR FROM HUGO'S CASTLE

HUGO, ERIC, *and two Monks* (LUKE *and* HUBERT). *The dead body of* HAROLD.

Luke :

When the dawn was breaking,
Came a faint sound, waking
Hubert and myself ; we hurried to the door,
Found the stranger lying
At the threshold, dying.
Somewhere have I seen a face like his before.

Hugo :

Harold he is hight.
Only yesternight
From our gates he wander'd, in the driving hail ;
Well his face I know,
Both as friend and foe ;
Of my followers only Thurston knows his tale.

Luke :

Few the words he said,
Faint the signs he made,
Twice or thrice he groaned ; quoth Hubert, ' Thou hast sinn'd.
This is retribution,
Seek for absolution ;
Answer me—then cast thy sorrows to the wind.
Do their voices reach thee,
Friends who failed to teach thee,
In thine earlier days, to sunder right from wrong ?
Charges 'gainst thee cited,
Cares all unrequited,
Counsels spurned and slighted—do they press and throng ? '

But he shook his head.
'Tis not so,' he said ;
'They will scarce reproach me who reproached of yore.
If their counsels good,
Rashly I withstood,
Having suffered longer, I have suffered more.'

'Do their curses stun thee ?
Foes who failed to shun thee,
Stricken by rash vengeance, in some wild career,
As the barbed arrow
Cleaveth bone and marrow,
From those chambers narrow—do they pierce thine ear ?'
And he made reply,
Laughing bitterly,
'Did I fear them living —shall I fear them dead ?
Blood that I have spilt
Leaveth little guilt ;
On the hand it resteth, scarcely on the head.'

'Is there one whom thou
May'st have wronged ere now,
Since remorse so sorely weigheth down thine heart ?
By some saint in heaven,
Sanctified and shriven,
Would'st thou be forgiven ere thy soul depart ?'
Not a word he said,
But he bowed his head
Till his temples rested on the chilly sods ;
And we heard him groan—
'Ah ! mine own, mine own !
If I had thy pardon I might ask for God's.'

Hubert raised him slowly,
Sunrise, faint and holy,
Lit the dead face, placid as a child's might be.
May the troubled spirit,
Through Christ's saving merit,
Peace and rest inherit. Thus we sent for thee.

Hugo :

God o'erruleth fate.
I had cause for hate :
In this very chapel, years back, proud and strong,
Joined by priestly vows,
He became the spouse
Of my youngest sister, to her bitter wrong.
And he wrought her woe,
Making me his foe ;
Not alone unfaithful—brutal, too, was he.
She had scarce been dead
Three months ere he fled
With Count Baldwin's daughter, then betrothed to me.
Fortune straight forsook him,
Vengeance overtook him ;
Heavy crimes will bring down heavy punishment.
All his strength was shatter'd,
Even his wits were scatter'd,
Half-deranged, half-crippled, wandering he went.
We are unforgiving
While our foes are living ;
Yet his retribution weigh'd so heavily
That I feel remorse
Gazing on his corse,
For my rudeness when he left our gates to die.

And his grave shall be
'Neath the chestnut tree,
Where he met my sister many years ago ;
Leave that tress of hair
On his bosom there—
Wrap the cerecloth round him ! Eric, let us go.

SCENE—A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

HUGO *and* ERIC. *Early morning.*

Hugo :

The morn is fair, the weary miles
Will shorten 'neath the summer's wiles,
Pomona in the orchard smiles,
And in the meadow, Flora !
And I have roused a chosen band
For escort through the troubled land :
And shaken Elspeth by the hand,
And said farewell to Thora.
Comrade and kinsman—for thou art
Comrade and kin to me—we part
Ere nightfall, if at once we start,
We gain the dead Count's castle.
The roads are fair, the days are fine,
Ere long I hope to reach the Rhine.
Forsooth, no friend to me or mine
Is that same Abbot Basil ;
I thought he wrong'd us by his greed.
My father sign'd a foolish deed
For lack of gold in time of need,
And thus our lands went by us ;

Yet wrong on our side may have been:
As far as my will goes, I ween,
'Tis past, the grudge that lay between
Us twain. Men call him pious—
And I have prosper'd much since then,
And gain'd for one lost acre ten;
And even the ancient house and glen
Rebought with purchase-money.
He, too, is wealthy; he has got
By churchly rights a fertile spot,
A land of corn and wine, I wot,
A land of milk and honey.
Now, Eric, change thy plans and ride
With us, thou hast no ties, no bride.

Eric:

Nay, ties I have, and time and tide,
Thou knowest, wait for no man;
And I go north; God's blessing shuns
The dwellings of forgetful sons,
That proverb he may read who runs,
In Christian lore or Roman.
My good old mother, she hath heard,
For twelve long months, from me no word;
At thought of her my heart is stirr'd,
And even mine eyes grow moister.
Greet Ursula from me; her fame
Is known to all. A nobler dame,
Since days of Clovis, ne'er became
The inmate of a cloister.
Our paths diverge, yet we may go
Together for a league or so;

I, too, will join thy band below
When thou thy bugle windest.

[ERIC *goes out.*

Hugo:

From weaknesses we stand afar,
On us unpleasantly they jar;
And yet the stoutest-hearted are
The gentlest and the kindest.
My mother loved me tenderly;
Alas! her only son was I.
I shudder'd, but my lids were dry,
By death made orphan newly.
A braver man than me, I swear,
Who never comprehended fear,
Scarce names his mother, and the tear,
Unbidden, springs unruly.

SCENE—A ROAD ON THE NORMAN FRONTIERS

HUGO, AGATHA, ORION, THURSTON, *and armed attendants, riding slowly.*

Agatha:

Sir Knight, what makes you so grave and glum?
At times I fear you are deaf or dumb,
Or both.

Hugo: And yet, should I speak the truth,
There is little in common 'twixt us, forsooth;
You would think me duller, and still more vain,
If I uttered the thoughts that fill my brain;
Since the matters with which my mind is laden
Would scarcely serve to amuse a maiden.

Agatha :

I am so foolish, and you are so wise,
Tis the meaning your words so ill disguise.
Alas ! my prospects are sad enough :
I had rather listen to speeches rough
Than muse and meditate silently
On the coming loss of my liberty.
Sad hope to me can my future bring,
Yet, while I may, I would prattle and sing,
Though it only were to try and assuage
The dreariness of my pilgrimage.

Hugo :

Prattle and sing to your heart's content,
And none will offer impediment.

Agatha (*sings*) *:*

We were playmates in childhood, my sister and I,
Whose playtime with childhood is done ;
Through thickets where brier and bramble grew high,
Barefooted I've oft seen her run.

I've known her, when mists on the moorland hung white,
Bareheaded past nightfall remain ;
She has followed a landless and penniless knight
Through battles and sieges in Spain.

But I pulled the flower, and shrank from the thorn,
Sought the sunshine, and fled from the mist ;
My sister was born to face hardship with scorn—
I was born to be fondled and kiss'd.

Hugo (*aside*) *:*

She has a sweet voice.

Orion : And a sweet face, too—
Be candid for once, and give her her due.

Agatha :
Your face grows longer, and still more long,
Sir Scholar ! how did you like my song ?

Hugo :
I thought it rather a silly one.

Agatha :
You are far from a pleasant companion.

SCENE—AN APARTMENT IN A WAYSIDE INN

HUGO *and* AGATHA. *Evening.*

Hugo :
I will leave you now—we have talked enough,
And for one so tenderly reared and nursed
This journey is wearisome, perhaps, and rough.

Agatha :
Will you not finish your story first ?

Hugo :
I repent me that I began it now,
'Tis a dismal tale for a maiden's ears ;
Your cheek is pale already, your brow
Is sad, and your eyes are moist with tears.

Agatha :
It may be thus, I am lightly vexed,
But the tears will lightly come and go ;

I can cry one moment and laugh the next,
Yet I have seen terrors, as well you know.
I remember that flight through moss and fern,
The moonlit shadows, the hoofs that rolled
In fierce pursuit, and the ending stern,
And the hawk that left his prey on the wold.

Hugo :

I have sorrowed since that I left you there :
Your friends were close behind on the heath,
Though not so close as I thought they were.
(*Aside*) Now I will not tell her of Harold's death.

Agatha :

'Tis true, I was justly punished, and men,
As a rule, of pity have little share ;
Had I died, you had cared but little then.

Hugo : But little then, yet now I should care
More than you think for. Now, good-night.
Tears still ? Ere I leave you, child, alone,
Must I dry your cheeks ?

Agatha : Nay, I am not quite
Such a child but what I can dry my own.
[*Hugo goes out. Agatha retires.*

Orion (*singing outside the window of Agatha's chamber*) *:*

'Neath the stems with blossoms laden,
'Neath the tendrils curling,
I, thy servant, sing, oh, maiden !
I, thy slave, oh, darling !

Lo! the shaft that slew the red deer,
At the elk may fly too.
Spare them not! The dead are dead, dear,
Let the living die too.

Where the wiles of serpent mingle,
And the looks of dove lie,
Where small hands in strong hands tingle,
Loving eyes meet lovely:
Where the harder natures soften,
And the softer harden—
Certes! such things have been often
Since we left Eve's garden.

Sweeter follies herald sadder
Sins—look not too closely;
Tongue of asp and tooth of adder
Under leaf of rose lie.
Warned, advised in vain, abandon
Warning and advice too,
Let the child lay wilful hand on
Den of cockatrice too.

I, thy servant, or thy master,
One or both—no matter;
If the former—firmer, faster,
Surer still the latter—
Lull thee, soothe thee with my singing,
Bid thee sleep, and ponder
On my lullabies, still ringing
Through thy dreamland yonder.

SCENE—A WOODED RISING GROUND, NEAR THE RHINE

HUGO *and* AGATHA *resting under the trees.* THURSTON, EUSTACE, *and followers a little apart.* ORION. (*Noonday.*) *The Towers of the Convent in the distance.*

Agatha :

I sit on the greensward, and hear the bird sing,
'Mid the thickets where scarlet and white blossoms cling ;
And beyond the sweet uplands all golden with flower,
It looms in the distance, the grey convent tower.
And the emerald earth and the sapphire-hued sky
Keep telling me ever my spring has gone by ;
Ah ! spring premature, they are tolling thy knell,
In the wind's soft adieu, in the bird's sweet farewell.
Oh ! why is the greensward with garlands so gay,
That I quail at the sight of my prison-house grey ?
Oh ! why is the bird's note so joyous and clear ?
The caged bird must pine in a cage doubly drear.

Hugo :

May the lances of Dagobert harry their house,
If they coax or intimidate thee to take vows ;
May the freebooters pillage their shrines, should they dare
Touch with their scissors thy glittering hair.
Our short and sweet journey now draws to an end,
And homeward my sorrowful way I must wend ;
Oh, fair one ! oh, loved one ! I would I were free,
To squander my life in the greenwood with thee.

Orion (*aside*) *:*

Ho ! seeker of knowledge, so grave and so wise,
Touch her soft curl again—look again in her eyes ;

Forget for the nonce musty parchments, and learn
How the slow pulse may quicken—the cold blood may burn.
Ho! fair, fickle maiden, so blooming and shy!
The old love is dead, let the old promise die!
Thou dost well, thou dost wise, take the word of Orion,
'A living dog always before a dead lion!'

. . . . . .

Thurston:

Ye varlets, I would I knew which of ye burst
Our wine-skin—what, ho! must I perish with thirst?
Go, Henry, thou hast a glib tongue, go and ask
Thy lord to send Ralph to yon inn for a flask.

Henry:

Nay, Thurston, not so; I decline to disturb
Our lord for the present; go thou, or else curb
Thy thirst, or drink water, as I do.

Thurston: Thou knave
Of a page, dost thou wish me the colic to have?

Orion (aside):

That clown is a thoroughbred Saxon. He thinks
With pleasure on naught save hard blows and strong drinks;
In hell he will scarce go athirst if once given
An inkling of any good liquors in heaven.

. . . . . .

Hugo :
Our Pontiff to manhood at Englemehr grow,
The priests there are many, the nuns are but few.
I love not the Abbot—'tis needless to tell
My reason ; but all of the Abbess speak well.

Agatha :
Through vineyards and cornfields beneath us, the Rhine
Spreads and winds, silver-white, in the merry sunshine ;
And the air, overcharged with a subtle perfume,
Grows faint from the essence of manifold bloom.

Hugo :
And the tinkling of bells, and the bleating of sheep,
And the chaunt from the fields, where the labourers reap
The earlier harvest, comes faint on the breeze,
That whispers so faintly in hedgerows and trees.

Orion :
And a wagon wends slow to those turrets and spires,
To feed the fat monks and the corpulent friars ;
It carries the corn, and the oil, and the wine,
The honey and milk from the shores of the Rhine.
The oxen are weary and spent with their load ;
They pause, but the driver doth recklessly goad ;
Up yon steep, flinty rise they have staggered and reeled,
Even devils may pity dumb beasts of the field.

Agatha (sings) :
Oh ! days and years departed,
Vain hopes, vain fears that smarted,
I turn to you, sad-hearted—
I turn to you in tears !

Your daily sun shone brightly,
Your happy dreams came nightly,
Flowers bloomed and birds sang lightly,
Through all your hopes and fears!

You halted not, nor tarried,
Your hopes have all miscarried,
And even your fears are buried,
Since fear with hope must die.
You halted not, but hasted,
And flew past, childhood wasted,
And girlhood scarcely tasted,
Now womanhood is nigh.

Yet I forgive your wronging,
Dead seasons round me thronging,
With yearning and with longing,
I call your bitters sweet.
Vain longing, and vain yearning,
There now is no returning;
Oh! beating heart and burning,
Forget to burn and beat!

Oh! childish suns and showers,
Oh! girlish thorns and flowers,
Oh! fruitless days and hours,
Oh! groundless hopes and fears:
The birds still chirp and twitter,
And still the sunbeams glitter:
Oh! barren years and bitter,
Oh! bitter, barren years!

SCENE—THE SUMMIT OF A BURNING MOUNTAIN

Night. A terrific storm. ORION (*undisguised*).

Orion (*sings*) :

From fathomless depths of abysses,
Where fires unquenchable burst,
From the blackness of darkness, where hisses
The brood of the serpent accurs'd ;
From shrines where the hymns are the weeping
And wailing and gnashing of teeth,
Where the palm is the pang never sleeping,
Where the worm never dying is the wreath ;
Where all fruits save wickedness wither,
Whence naught save despair can be gleaned—
Come hither ! come hither ! come hither !
Fall'n angel, fell sprite, and foul fiend.
Come hither ! the bands are all broken,
And loosed in hell's innermost womb,
When the spell unpronounceable spoken
Divides the unspeakable gloom.

Evil Spirits approach. The storm increases.

Evil Spirits (*singing*) :

We hear thee, we seek thee, on pinions
That darken the shades of the shade ;
Oh ! Prince of the Air, with dominions
Encompass'd, with powers array'd,
With majesty cloth'd as a garment,
Begirt with a shadowy shine,
Whose feet scorch the hill-tops that are meant
As footstools for thee and for thine.

Orion (*sings*) :

How it swells through each pause of the thunder,
And mounts through each lull of the gust,
Through the crashing of crags torn asunder,
And the hurtling of trees in the dust ;
With a chorus of loud lamentations,
With its dreary and hopeless refrain !
'Tis the cry of all tongues and all nations,
That suffer and shudder in vain.

Evil Spirits (*singing*) :

'Tis the cry of all tongues and all nations ;
Our song shall chime in with their strain ;
Lost spirits blend their wild exultations
With the sighing of mortals in pain.

Orion (*sings*) :

With just light enough to see sorrows
In this world, and terrors beyond,
'Twixt the day's bitter pangs and the morrow's
Dread doubts, to despair and despond,
Man lingers through toils unavailing
For blessings that baffle his grasp ;
To his cradle he comes with a wailing,
He goes to his grave with a gasp.

Evil Spirits (*singing*) :

His birth is a weeping and wailing,
His death is a groan and a gasp ;
O'er the seed of the woman prevailing,
Thus triumphs the seed of the asp.

SCENE—CHAMBER OF A WAYSIDE INN

HUGO *sitting alone. Evening.*

Hugo:

And now the parting is over,
The parting should end the pain;
And the restless heart may recover,
And so may the troubled brain.
I am sitting within the chamber
Whose windows look on the porch,
Where the roses cluster and clamber ·
We halted here on our march
With her to the convent going,
And now I go back alone:
Ye roses, budding and blowing,
Ye heed not though she is flown.

I remember the girlish gesture,
The sportive and childlike grace,
With which she crumpled and pressed your
Rose leaves to her rose-hued face.
Shall I think on her ways hereafter—
On those flashes of mirth and grief,
On that April of tears and laughter,
On our parting, bitterly brief?

I remember the bell at sunrise,
That sounded so solemnly,
Bidding monk, and prelate, and nun rise;
I rose ere the sun was high.
Down the long, dark, dismal passage,
To the door of her resting-place

I went, on a farewell message,
I trod with a stealthy pace.
There was no one there to see us
When she opened her chamber door.
'*Miserere, mei Deus,*'
Rang faint from the convent choir.

I remember the dark and narrow
And scantily-furnished room;
And the gleam, like a golden arrow—
The gleam that lighted the gloom.
One couch, one seat, and one table,
One window, and only one—
It stands in the eastern gable,
It faces the rising sun;
One ray shot through it, and one light
On doorway and threshold played.
She stood within in the sunlight,
I stood without in the shade.

I remember that bright form under
The sheen of that slanting ray.
I spoke—'For life we must sunder,
Let us sunder without delay.
Let us sever without preamble,
As brother and sister part,
For the sake of one pleasant ramble,
That will live in at least one heart.'
Still the choir in my ears rang faintly,
In the distance dying away,
Sweetly and sadly and saintly,
Through arch and corridor grey!

And thus we parted for ever,
  Between the shade and the shine;
Not as brother and sister sever—
  I fondled her hands in mine.
Still the choir in my ears rang deaden'd
  And dull'd, though audible yet;
And she redden'd, and paled, and redden'd—
  Her lashes and lids grew wet.
Not as brother severs from sister,
  My lips clung fast to her lips;
She shivered and shrank when I kissed her.
  On the sunbeam drooped the eclipse.

I remember little of the parting
  With the Abbot, down by the gate,
My men were eager for starting;
  I think he pressed me to wait.
From the lands where convent and glebe lie,
  From manors, and Church's right,
Where I fought temptation so feebly,
  I, too, felt eager for flight.

Alas! the parting is over:
  The parting, but not the pain—
Oh! sweet was the purple clover,
  And sweet was the yellow grain;
And sweet were the woody hollows
  On the summery Rhineward track;
But a winter untimely swallows
  All sweets as I travel back.

Yet I feel assured, in some fashion,
  Ere the hedges are crisp with rime,

I shall conquer this senseless passion,
'Twill yield to toil and to time.
I will fetter these fancies roaming;
Already the sun has dipp'd;
I will trim the lamps in the gloaming,
I will finish my manuscript.
Through the nightwatch unflagging study
Shall banish regrets perforce;
As soon as the east is ruddy
Our bugle shall sound 'To Horse!'

SCENE—ANOTHER WAYSIDE HOUSE, NEAR THE NORMAN FRONTIER

HUGO *and* ORION *in a chamber. Evening.*

Orion:
Your eyes are hollow, your step is slow,
And your cheek is pallid as though from toil,
Watching or fasting, by which I know
That you have been burning the midnight oil.

Hugo:
Aye, three nights running.

Orion: 'Twill never do
To travel all day, and study all night;
Will you join in a gallop through mist and dew,
In a flight that may vie with the eagle's flight?

Hugo:
With all my heart. Shall we saddle 'Rollo'?

Orion :

Nay, leave him undisturb'd in his stall ;
I have steeds he would hardly care to follow.

Hugo :

Follow, forsooth ! he can lead them all.

Orion :

Touching his merits we will not quarrel,
But let me mount you for once ; enough
Of work may await your favourite sorrel,
And the paths we must traverse to-night are rough.
But first let me mix you a beverage,
To invigorate your enfeebled frame.
[*He mixes a draught and hands it to Hugo.*
All human ills this draught can assuage.

Hugo :

It hisses and glows like liquid flame ;
Say, what quack nostrum is this thou'st brewed ?
Speak out ; I am learned in the chemist's lore.

Orion :

There is nothing but what will do you good ;
And the drugs are simples ; 'tis hellebore,
Nepenthe, upas, and dragon's blood,
Absinthe, and mandrake, and mandragore.

Hugo :

I will drink it, although, by mass and rood,
I am just as wise as I was before.

SCENE– A ROUGH, HILLY COUNTRY

HUGO *and* ORION *riding at speed on black horses. Mountains in the distance. Night.*

Hugo :

See ! the sparks that fly from our hoof-strokes make
A fiery track that gleams in our wake ;
Like a dream the dim landscape past us shoots,
Our horses fly.

Orion : They are useful brutes,
Though somewhat skittish ; the foam is whit'ning
The crest and rein of my courser ' Lightning ' ;
He pulls to-night, being short of work,
And takes his head with a sudden jerk ;
Still heel and steady hand on the bit,
For that is ' Tempest ' on which you sit.

Hugo :

'Tis the bravest steed that ever I back'd ;
Did'st mark how he crossed yon cataract ?
From hoof to hoof I should like to measure
The space he clear'd.

Orion : He can clear at leisure
A greater distance. Observe the chasm
We are nearing. Ha ! did you feel a spasm
As we flew over it ?

Hugo : Not at all.

Orion :

Nathless 'twas an ugly place for a fall.

Hugo :

Let us try a race to yon mountain high,
That rears its dusky peak 'gainst the sky.

Orion :

I won't disparage your horsemanship,
But your steed will stand neither spur nor whip,
And is hasty and hard to steer at times.
We must travel far ere the midnight chimes ;
We must travel back ere the east is grey.
Ho ! 'Lightning !' 'Tempest !' Away ! Away !

[*They ride on faster.*

SCENE—A PEAK IN A MOUNTAINOUS COUNTRY OVERHANGING A ROCKY PASS

HUGO *and* ORION *on black horses. Midnight.*

Hugo :

These steeds are sprung from no common race,
Their vigour seems to annihilate space ;
What hast thou brought me here to see ?

Orion :

No boisterous scene of unhallow'd glee,
No sabbat of witches coarse and rude,
But a mystic and musical interlude ;
You have long'd to explore the scrolls of Fate,
Dismount, as I do, and listen and wait.

[*They dismount.*

Orion (*chanting*) *:*

Spirits of earth, and air, and sea,
Spirits unclean, and spirits untrue,
By the symbols three, that shall nameless be,
One of your masters calls on you.

Spirits (*chanting in the distance*) :

From the bowels of earth, where gleams the gold ;
From the air, where the powers of darkness hold
Their court ; from the white sea-foam,
Whence the white rose-tinted goddess sprung,
Whom poets of every age have sung,
Ever we come ! we come !

Hugo :

How close to our ears the thunder peals !
How the earth beneath us shudders and reels !

A Voice (*chanting*) :

Woe to the earth ! Where men give death !
And women give birth !
To the sons of Adam, by Cain or Seth !
Plenty and dearth !
To the daughters of Eve, who toil and spin,
Barren of worth !
Let them sigh, and sicken, and suffer sin !
Woe to the earth !

Hugo :

What is yon phantom large and dim
That over the mountain seems to swim ?

Orion :

'Tis the scarlet woman of Babylon !

Hugo :

Whence does she come ? Where has she gone ?
And who is she ?

Orion : You would know too much ;
These are subjects on which I dare not touch ;

And if I were to try and enlighten you,
I should probably fail, and possibly frighten you,
You had better ask some learned divine,
Whose opinion is p'rhaps worth as much as mine
In his own conceit ; and who, besides,
Could tell you the brand of the beast she rides.
What can you see in the valley yonder ?
Speak out ; I can hear you, for all the thunder.

Hugo :
I see four shadowy altars rise,
They seem to swell and dilate in size ;
Larger and clearer now they loom,
Now fires are lighting them through the gloom

A Voice (*chanting*) *:*
The first a golden-hued fire shows,
A blood-red flame on the second glows,
The blaze on the third is tinged like the rose,
From the fourth a column of black smoke goes.

Orion :
Can you see all this ?

Hugo : I see and hear ;
The lights and hues are vivid and clear.

Spirits (*sing at the first altar*) *:*
Hail, Mammon ! while man buys and barters,
Thy kingdom in this world is sure ;
Thy prophets thou hast and thy martyrs,
Great things in thy name they endure ;

Thy fetters of gold crush the miser,
The usurer bends at thy shrine,
And the wealthier nations and the wiser
Bow with us at this altar of thine.

Spirits (*sing at the second altar*) :

Hail, Moloch ! whose banner floats blood-red
From pole to equator unfurl'd,
Whose laws redly written have stood red,
And shall stand while standeth this world ;
Clad in purple, with thy diadem gory,
Thy sceptre the blood-dripping steel,
Thy subjects with us give thee glory,
With us at thine altar they kneel.

Spirits (*sing at the third altar*) :

Hail, Sovereign ! whose fires are kindled
By sparks from the bottomless pit,
Has thy worship diminish'd or dwindled ?
Do the yokes of thy slaves lightly sit ?
Nay, the men of all climes and all races
Are stirr'd by the flames that now stir us ;
Then (as we do) they fall on their faces,
Crying, ' Hear us ! Oh ! Ashtaroth, hear us ! '

Spirits (*all in chorus*) :

The vulture her carrion swallows,
Returns to his vomit the dog,
In the slough of uncleanliness wallows
The he-goat, and revels the hog.

Men are wise with their schools and their teachers,
Men are just with their creeds and their priests ;
Yet, in spite of their pedants and preachers,
They backslide in footprints of beasts !

Hugo :

From the smoky altar there seems to come
A stifled murmur, a droning hum.

Orion :

With that we have nothing at all to do,
Or, at least, not now, neither I nor you ;
Though some day or other, possibly,
We may see it closer, both you and I ;
Let us visit the nearest altar first,
Whence the yellow fires flicker and burst,
Like the flames from molten ore that spring ;
We may stand in the pale of the outer ring,
But forbear to trespass within the inner,
Lest the sins of the past should find out the sinner.

[*They approach the first altar, and stand within the outer circle which surrounds it, and near the inner.*

Spirits (sing) :

Beneath us it flashes,
The glittering gold,
Though it turneth to ashes
And dross in the hold ;
Yet man will endeavour,
By fraud or by strife,
To grasp it and never
To yield it with life.

Orion :
What can you see ?

Hugo : Some decrepit shapes,
That are neither dwarfs, nor demons, nor apes ;
In the hollow earth they appear to store
And rake together great heaps of ore.

Orion :
These are the gnomes, coarse sprites and rough :
Come on, of these we have seen enough.

[*They approach second altar, and stand as before.*

Spirits (*singing*) :
Above us it flashes,
The glittering steel,
Though the red blood splashes
Where its victims reel ;
Yet man will endeavour
To grapple the hilt,
And to wield the blade ever
Till his life be spilt.

Orion :
What see you now ?

Hugo : A rocky glen,
A horrid jumble of fighting men,
And a face that somewhere I've seen before.

Orion :
Come on ; there is naught worth seeing more,
Except the altar of Ashtaroth.

Hugo :
To visit that altar I am loth.

Orion :
Why so ?

Hugo : Nay, I cannot fathom why,
But I feel no curiosity.

Orion :
Come on. Stand close to the inner ring,
And hear how sweetly these spirits sing.
[*They approach third altar.*

Spirits (*sing*) *:*
Around us it flashes,
The cestus of one
Born of white foam, that dashes
Beneath the white sun ;
Let the mortal take heart, he
Has nothing to dare ;
She is fair, Queen Astarté,
Her subjects are fair !

Orion :
What see you now, friend ?

Hugo : Wood and wold,
And forms that look like the nymphs of old.
There is nothing here worth looking at twice.
I have seen enough.

Orion : You are far too nice ;
Nevertheless you must look again.
Those forms will fade.

Hugo : They are growing less plain.
They vanish. I see a door that seems
To open ; a ray of sunlight gleams
From a window behind ; a vision as fair
As the flush of dawn is standing there.

[*He gazes earnestly.*

Orion (*sings*) :

Higher and hotter the white flames glow,
And the adamant may be thaw'd like snow,
And the life for a single chance may go,
And the soul for a certainty.
Oh ! vain and shallow philosopher,
Dost feel them quicken, dost feel them stir,
The thoughts that have stray'd again to *her*
From whom thou hast sought to fly ?

Lo ! the furnace is heated till sevenfold ;
Is thy brain still calm ? Is thy blood still cold
To the curls that wander in ripples of gold
On the shoulders of ivory ?
Do the large, dark eyes, and the small, red mouth,
Consume thy heart with a fiery drouth,
Like the fierce sirocco that sweeps from the south,
When the deserts are parch'd and dry ?

Aye, start and shiver and catch thy breath,
The sting is certain, the venom is death,
And the scales are flashing the fruit beneath,
And the fang striketh suddenly.

At the core the ashes are bitter and dead,
But the rind is fair and the rind is red,
It has ever been pluck'd since the serpent said,
Thou shalt *not surely* die.

[*Hugo tries to enter the inner ring; Orion holds him back; they struggle.*

Hugo:
Unhand me, slave! or quail to the rod!
Agatha! Speak! in the name of God!

[*The vision disappears, the altars vanish. Hugo falls insensible.*

SCENE—THE WAYSIDE HOUSE

HUGO *waking in his Chamber.* ORION *unseen at first. Morning.*

Hugo:
Vanish, fair and fatal vision!
Fleeting shade of fever'd sleep,
Chiding one whose indecision
Waking substance fail'd to keep;
Picture into life half starting,
As in life once seen before,
Parting somewhat sadly, parting
Slowly at the chamber door.

Were my waking senses duller?
Have I seen with mental eye
Light and shade, and warmth and colour,
Plainer than reality?

Sunlight that on tangled tresses
  Every ripple gilds and tips;
Balm and bloom, and breath of kisses,
  Warm on dewy, scarlet lips.

Dark eyes veiling half their splendour
  'Neath their lashes' darker fringe,
Dusky, dreamy, deep and tender,
  Passing smile and passing tinge;
Dimpling fast and flushing faster,
  Ivory chin and coral cheek,
Pearly strings, by alabaster
  Neck and arms made faint and weak;

Drooping, downcast lids enduring
  Gaze of man unwillingly;
Sudden sidelong gleams alluring,
  Partly arch and partly shy.
Do I bless or curse that beauty?
  Am I longing, am I loth?
Is it passion, is it duty
  That I strive with, one or both?

Round about one fiery centre
  Wayward thoughts like moths revolve.
[*He sees Orion.*
Ha! Orion, thou didst enter
  Unperceived. I pray thee solve
These two questions: Firstly, tell me
  Must I strive for wrong or right?
Secondly, what things befell me—
  Facts, or phantasies—last night?

Orion :

First, your strife is all a sham, you
Know as well as I which wins ;
Second, waking sins will damn you,
Never mind your sleeping sins ;
Both your questions thus I answer ;
Listen, ere you seek or shun :
I at least am no romancer,
What you long for may be won.
Turn again and travel Rhineward,
Tread once more the flowery path.

Hugo :

Aye, the flowery path that, sinward
Pointing, ends in sin and wrath.

Orion :

Songs by love-birds lightly caroll'd
Even the just man may allure.

Hugo :

To his shame ; in this wise Harold
Sinn'd, his punishment was sure.

Orion :

Nay, the Dane was worse than you are,
Base and pitiless to boot ;
Doubtless all are bad, yet few are
Cruel, false, and dissolute.

Hugo :

Some sins foreign to our nature
Seem ; we take no credit when
We escape them.

Orion : Yet the creature,
Sin-created, lives to sin.

Hugo :
Be it so ; come good, come evil,
Ride we to the Rhine again !

Orion (*aside*) *:*
'Gainst the logic of the devil
Human logic strives in vain.

SCENE—A CAMP NEAR THE BLACK FOREST

RUDOLPH, OSRIC, DAGOBERT, *and followers.* ORION *disguised as one of the Free-lances. Midday.*

Osric :
Now, by axe of Odin, and hammer of Thor,
And by all the gods of the Viking's war,
I swear we have quitted our homes in vain ;
We have nothing to look to, glory nor gain.
Will our galley return to Norway's shore
With heavier gold, or with costlier store ?
Will our exploits furnish the scald with a song ?
We have travell'd too far, we have tarried too long.
Say, captains all, is there ever a village
For miles around that is worth the pillage ?
Will it pay the costs of my men or yours
To harry the homesteads of German boors ?
Have we cause for pride in our feats of arms
When we plunder the peasants or sack the farms ?

I tell thee, Rudolph of Rothenstein,
That were thy soldiers willing as mine,
And I sole leader of this array,
I would give Prince Otto battle this day.
Dost thou call thy followers men of war ?
Oh, Dagobert ! thou whose ancestor
On the neck of the Caesar's offspring trod,
Who was justly surnamed ' The Scourge of God '.
Yet in flight lies safety. Skirmish and run
To forest and fastness, Teuton and Hun,
From the banks of the Rhine to the Danube's shore,
And back to the banks of the Rhine once more ;
Retreat from the face of an armèd foe,
Robbing garden and henroost where'er you go.
Let the short alliance betwixt us cease,
I and my Norsemen will go in peace !
I wot it never will suit with us,
Such existence, tame and inglorious ;
I could live no worse, living single-handed,
And better with half my men disbanded.

Rudolph :

Jarl Osric, what wouldst thou have me do ?
'Gainst Otto's army our men count few ;
With one chance of victory, fight, say I !
But not when defeat is a certainty.
If Rudiger joins us with his free-lances,
Our chance will be equal to many chances ;
For Rudiger is both prompt and wary,
And his men are gallant though mercenary ;
But the knave refuses to send a lance
Till half the money is paid in advance.

Dagobert :

May his avarice wither him like a curse !
I guess he has heard of our late reverse ;
But, Rudolph, whether he goes or stays,
There is reason in what Jarl Osric says ;
Of provisions we need a fresh supply,
And our butts and flasks are shallow dry,
My men are beginning to grumble sadly,
'Tis no wonder, since they must fare so badly.

Rudolph :

We have plenty of foragers out, and still
We have plenty of hungry mouths to fill ;
And, moreover, by some means, foul or fair,
We must raise money ; 'tis little I care,
So long as we raise it, whence it comes.

Osric :

Shall we sit till nightfall biting our thumbs ?
The shortest plan is ever the best ;
Has any one here got aught to suggest ?

Orion :

The cornfields are golden that skirt the Rhine,
Fat are the oxen, strong is the wine,
In those pleasant pastures, those cellars deep,
That o'erflow with the tears that those vineyards weep ;
Is it silver you stand in need of, or gold ?
Ingot or coin ? There is wealth untold
In the ancient convent of Englemehr ;
That is not so very far from here.

The Abbot, esteem'd a holy man,
Will hold what he has and grasp what he can ;
The cream of the soil he loves to skim,
Why not levy a contribution on him ?

Dagobert :

The stranger speaks well ; not far away
That convent lies ; and one summer's day
Will suffice for a horseman to reach the gate ;
The garrison soon would capitulate,
Since the arm'd retainers are next to none,
And the walls, I wot, may be quickly won.

Rudolph :

I kept those walls for two months and more,
When they feared the riders of Melchior ;
That was little over three years ago.
Their Abbot is thrifty, as well I know ;
He haggled sorely about the price
Of our service.

Dagobert : Rudolph, he paid thee twice.

Rudolph :

Well, what of that ? Since then I've tried
To borrow from him ; now I know he lied
When he told me he could not spare the sum
I asked. If we to his gates should come,
He could spare it though it were doubled ; and still,
This war with the Church, I like it ill.

Osric :

The creed of our fathers is well nigh dead,
And the creed of the Christian reigns in its stead ;

But the creed of the Christian, too, may die,
For your creeds or your churches what care I !
If there be plunder at Englemehr,
Let us strike our tents and thitherward steer.

SCENE—A FARM-HOUSE ON THE RHINE

(*About a mile from the Convent.*)

HUGO *in chamber alone.* *Enter* ERIC.

Eric :

What, Hugo, still at the Rhine ! I thought
You were home. You have travell'd by stages short.

Hugo (*with hesitation*) *:*

Our homeward march was labour in vain,
We had to retrace our steps again ;
It was here or hereabouts that I lost
Some papers of value ; at any cost
I must find them ; and which way lies your course ?

Eric :

I go to recruit Prince Otto's force.
I cannot study as you do ; I
Am wearied with inactivity,
So I carry a blade engrim'd with rust
(That a hand sloth-slacken'd has, I trust,
Not quite forgotten the way to wield),
To strike once more on the tented field.

Hugo :

Fighting is all a mistake, friend Eric,
And has been so since the age Homeric,

When Greece was shaken and Troy undone,
Ten thousand lives for a worthless one.
Yet I blame you not; you might well do worse;
Better fight and perish than live to curse
The day you were born; and such has been
The lot of many, and shall, I ween,
Be the lot of more. If Thurston chooses
He may go with you; the blockhead abuses
Me and the life I lead.

Enter ORION.

Orion: Great news!
The Englemehr monks will shake in their shoes;
In the soles of their callous feet will shake
The barefooted friars. The nuns will quake.

Hugo:
Wherefore?

Orion: The outlaw of Rothenstein
Has come with his soldiers to the Rhine,
Back'd by those hardy adventurers
From the northern forests of pines and firs,
And Dagobert's horse. They march as straight
As the eagle swoops to the convent gate.

Hugo:
We must do something to save the place.

Orion:
They are sure to take it in any case,
Unless the sum that they ask is paid.

Eric :

Some effort on our part must be made.

Hugo :

'Tis not so much for the monks I care.

Eric :

Nor I ; but the Abbess and nuns are there.

Orion :

'Tis not our business ; what can we do ?
They are too many, and we are too few ;
And yet, I suppose, you will save, if you can,
That lady, your ward, or your kinswoman.

Hugo :

She is no kinswoman of mine ;
How far is Otto's camp from the Rhine ?

Orion :

Too far for help in such time of need
To be brought, though you used your utmost speed.

Eric :

Nay, that I doubt.

Hugo : And how many men
Have they ?

Orion : To your one they could muster ten.

Eric :

I know Count Rudolph, and terms may be made
With him, I fancy ; for though his trade

Is a rough one now, gainsay it who can,
He was once a knight and a gentleman.
And Dagobert, the chief of the Huns,
Bad as he is, will spare the nuns ;
Though neither he nor the Count could check
Those lawless men, should they storm and sack
The convent. Jarl Osric, too, I know ;
He is rather a formidable foe,
And will likely enough be troublesome ;
But the others, I trust, to terms will come.

Hugo :
Eric, how many men have you ?
I can count a score.

Eric : I have only two.

Hugo :
At every hazard we must try to save
The nuns.

Eric : Count Rudolph shall think we have
A force that almost equals his own,
If I can confer with him alone.

Orion :
He is close at hand ; by this time he waits
The Abbot's reply at the convent gates.

Hugo :
We had better send him a herald.

Eric : Nay,
I will go myself. [*Eric goes out.*

Hugo : Orion, stay !
So this is the reed on which I've leaned,
These are the hopes thou hast fostered, these
The flames thou hast fanned. Oh, lying fiend !
Is it thus thou dost keep thy promises ?

Orion :
Strong language, Hugo, and most unjust ;
You will cry out before you are hurt—
You will live to recall your words, I trust.
Fear nothing from Osric or Dagobert,
These are your friends, if you only knew it,
And would take the advice of a friend sincere :
Neglect his counsels and you must rue it,
For I know by a sign the crisis is near.
Accept the terms of these outlaws all,
And be thankful that things have fallen out
Exactly as you would have had them fall—
You may save the one that you care about ;
Otherwise, how did you hope to gain
Access to her—on what pretence ?
What were the schemes that worried your brain
To tempt her there or to lure her thence ?
You must have bungled, and raised a scandal
About your ears, that might well have shamed
The rudest Hun, the veriest Vandal,
Long or ever the bird was tamed.

Hugo :
The convent is scarce surrounded yet,
We might reach and hold it against their force
Till another sun has risen and set ;
And should I dispatch my fleetest horse
To Otto——

Orion : For Abbot, or Monk, or Friar,
Between ourselves, 'tis little you care
If their halls are harried by steel and fire :
Their avarice left your heritage bare.
Forsake them ! Mitres, and cowls, and hoods
Will cover vices while earth endures ;
Through the green and gold of the summer woods
Ride out with that pretty bird of yours.
If again you fail to improve your chance,
Why, then, my friend, I can only say
You are duller far than the dullest lance
That rides in Dagobert's troop this day.
'*Foemina semper*,' frown not thus,
The girl was always giddy and wild,
Vain, and foolish, and frivolous,
Since she fled from her father's halls, a child.
I sought to initiate you once
In the mystic lore of the old Chaldean ;
But I found you far too stubborn a dunce,
And your tastes are coarser and more plebeian.
Yet mark my words, for I read the stars,
And trace the future in yonder sky,
To the right are wars and rumours of wars,
To the left are peace and prosperity.
Fear naught. The world shall never detect
The cloven hoof, so carefully hid
By the scholar so staid and circumspect,
So wise for once to do as he's bid.
Remember what pangs come year by year
For opportunity that has fled ;
And Thora in ignorance.

Hugo : Name not her !
I am sorely tempted to strike thee dead !

Orion :
Nay, I hardly think you will take my life,
The angel Michael was once my foe ;
He had a little the best of our strife,
Yet he never could deal so stark a blow.

SCENE—A CHAMBER IN THE NUNS' APARTMENTS OF THE CONVENT

AGATHA *and* URSULA.

Agatha :
My sire in my childhood pledged my hand
To Hugo—I know not why—
They were comrades then, 'neath the Duke's command,
In the wars of Lombardy.
I thought, ere my summers had turned sixteen,
That mine was a grievous case ;
Save once, for an hour, I had never seen
My intended bridegroom's face ;
And maidens vows of their own will plight.
Unknown to my kinsfolk all
My love was vowed to a Danish knight,
A guest in my father's hall.
His foot fell lightest in merry dance,
His shaft never missed the deer ;
He could fly a hawk, he could wield a lance,
Our wildest colt he could steer.
His deep voice ringing through hall or glen
Had never its match in song ;

And little was known of his past life then,
Or of Dorothea's wrong.
I loved him—Lady Abbess, I know
That my love was foolish now;
I was but a child five years ago,
And thoughtless as bird on bough.
One evening Hugo the Norman came,
And, to shorten a weary tale,
I fled that night (let me bear the blame)
With Harold by down and dale.
He had mounted me on a dappled steed,
And another of coal-black hue
He rode himself; and away at speed
We fled, through mist and dew.

Of miles we had ridden some half a score,
We had halted beside a spring,
When the breeze to our ears through the still night bore
A distant trample and ring;
We listen'd one breathing space, and caught
The clatter of mounted men.
With vigour renewed by their respite short
Our horses dash'd through the glen.
Another league, and we listen'd in vain;
The breeze to our ears came mute,
But we heard them again on the spacious plain,
Faint tidings of hot pursuit.
In the misty light of a moon half hid
By the dark or fleecy rack,
Our shadows over the moorland slid;
Still listening and looking back.

So we fled (with a cheering word to say
At times as we hurried on),
From sounds that at intervals died away,
And at intervals came anon.
Another league, and my lips grew dumb,
And I felt my spirit quailing,
For closer those sounds began to come,
And the speed of my horse was failing.
'The grey is weary and lame to boot,'
Quoth Harold; 'the black is strong,
And their steeds are blown with their fierce pursuit,
What wonder! our start was long.
Now, lady, behind me mount the black,
The double load he can bear;
We are safe when we reach the forest track,
Fresh horses and friends wait there.'
Then I sat behind him and held his waist,
And faster we seemed to go
By moss and moor; but for all our haste
Came the tramp of the nearing foe.
A dyke through the mist before us hover'd,
And, quicken'd by voice and heel,
The black overleap'd it, stagger'd, recover'd;
Still nearer that muffled peal.
And louder on sward the hoof-strokes grew,
And duller, though not less nigh,
On deader sand; and a dark speck drew
On my vision suddenly,
And a single horseman in fleet career,
Like a shadow appeared to glide
To within six lances' lengths of our rear,
And there for a space to bide.

Quoth Harold, 'Speak, has the moon reveal'd
His face?' I replied, 'Not so;
Yet 'tis none of my kinsfolk.' Then he wheel'd
In the saddle and scann'd the foe,
And mutter'd, still gazing in our wake,
''Tis he; now I will not fight
The brother again, for the sister's sake,
While I can escape by flight.'
'Who, Harold?' I asked; but he never spoke.
By the cry of the bittern harsh,
And the bullfrog's dull, discordant croak,
I guess'd that we near'd the marsh;
And the moonbeam flash'd on watery sedge
As it broke from a strip of cloud,
Ragged and jagged about the edge,
And shaped like a dead man's shroud.
And flagg'd and falter'd our gallant steed,
'Neath the weight of his double burden,
As we splash'd through water and crash'd through reed;
Then the soil began to harden,
And again we gain'd, or we seem'd to gain,
With our foe in the deep morass;
But those fleet hoofs thunder'd, and gain'd again,
When they trampled the firmer grass,
And I cried, and Harold again look'd back,
And bade me fasten mine eyes on
The forest, that loom'd like a patch of black
Standing out from the faint horizon.

'Courage, sweetheart! we are saved,' he said;
'With the moorland our danger ends,
And close to the borders of yonder glade
They tarry, our trusty friends.'

Where the mossy uplands rise and dip
On the edge of the leafy dell,
With a lurch, like the lurch of a sinking ship,
The black horse toppled and fell.
Unharm'd we lit on the velvet sward,
And even as I lit I lay,
But Harold uprose, unsheath'd his sword,
And toss'd the scabbard away.
And spake through his teeth, 'Good brother-in-law,
Forbearance, at last, is spent;
The strife that thy soul hath lusted for,
Thou shalt have to thy soul's content!'
While he spoke our pursuer past us swept,
Ere he rein'd his warhorse proud,
To his haunches flung, then to the earth he leapt,
And my lover's voice rang loud:
'Thrice welcome! Hugo of Normandy,
Thou hast come at our time of need,
This lady will thank thee, and so will I,
For the loan of thy sorrel steed!'

And never a word Lord Hugo said,
They clos'd 'twixt the wood and the wold,
And the white steel flickered over my head
In the moonlight calm and cold;
'Mid the feathery grasses crouching low,
With face bow'd down to the dust,
I heard the clash of each warded blow,
The click of each parried thrust,
And the shuffling feet that bruis'd the lawn,
As they traversed here and there,
And the breath through the clench'd teeth heavily drawn,
When breath there was none to spare;

Sharp ringing sword-play, dull, trampling heel,
Short pause, spent force to regain,
Quick muffled footfall, harsh grating steel,
Sharp ringing rally again ;
They seem'd long hours those moments fleet,
As I counted them one by one,
Till a dead weight toppled across my feet,
And I knew that the strife was done.

When I look'd up, after a little space,
As though from a fearful dream,
The moon was flinging on Harold's face
A white and a weird-like gleam ;
And I felt mine ankles moist and warm
With the blood that trickled slow
From a spot on the doublet beneath his arm
From a ghastly gash on his brow ;
I heard the tread of the sorrel's hoof,
As he bore his lord away ;
They pass'd me slowly, keeping aloof,
Like spectres misty and grey.
I thought Lord Hugo had left me there
To die, but it was not so ;
Yet then for death I had little care,
My soul seem'd numb'd by the blow ;
A faintness follow'd, a sickly swoon,
A long and a dreamless sleep,
And I woke to the light of a sultry noon
In my father's castled keep.

And thus, Lady Abbess, it came to pass
That my father vow'd his vow :

Must his daughter espouse the Church ? Alas !
Is she better or wiser now ?
For some are feeble and others strong,
And feeble am I and frail.
Mother, 'tis not that I love the wrong,
'Tis not that I loathe the veil,
But with heart still ready to go astray,
If assail'd by a fresh temptation,
I could sin again as I sinn'd that day
For a girl's infatuation.
See ! Harold, the Dane, thou say'st is dead,
Yet I weep *not bitterly ;*
As I fled with the Dane, so I might have fled
With Hugo of Normandy.

Ursula :

My child, I advise no hasty vows,
Yet I pray that in life's brief span
Thou may'st learn that our Church is a fairer spouse
Than fickle and erring man ;
Though fenced for a time by the Church's pale,
When that time expires thou 'rt free ;
And we cannot force thee to take the veil,
Nay, we scarce can counsel thee.

Enter the ABBOT *hastily.*

Basil (the Abbot) :

I am sorely stricken with shame and grief,
It has come by the selfsame sign,
A summons brief from the outlaw'd chief,
Count Rudolph of Rothenstein.

Lady Abbess, ere worse things come to pass,
I would speak with thee alone ;
Alack and alas ! for by the rood and mass
I fear we are all undone.

SCENE—A FARM-HOUSE NEAR THE CONVENT

A Chamber furnished with writing materials. HUGO, ERIC, *and* THURSTON *on one side ; on the other* OSRIC, RUDOLPH, *and* DAGOBERT.

Osric :
We have granted too much, ye ask for more ;
I am not skill'd in your clerkly lore,
I scorn your logic ; I had rather die
Than live like Hugo of Normandy ;
I am a Norseman, frank and plain ;
Ye must read the parchment over again.

Eric :
Jarl Osric, twice we have read this scroll.

Osric :
Thou hast read a part.

Eric : I have read the whole.

Osric :
Aye, since I attached my signature.

Eric :
Before and since !

Rudolph : Nay, of this be sure,
Thou hast signed ; in fairness now let it rest.

Osric :

I had rather have sign'd upon Hugo's crest ;
He has argued the question mouth to mouth
With the wordy lore of the subtle south ;
Let him or any one of his band
Come and argue the question hand to hand.
With the aid of my battle-axe I will show
That a score of words are not worth one blow.

Thurston :

To the devil with thee and thy battle-axe ;
I would send the pair of ye back in your tracks,
With an answer that even to thy boorish brain
Would scarce need repetition again.

Osric :

Thou Saxon slave to a milksop knight,
I will give thy body to raven and kite.

Thurston :

Thou liest : I am a freeborn man,
And thy huge carcass—in cubit and span
Like the giant's of Gath—'neath Saxon steel,
Shall furnish the kites with a fatter meal.

Osric :

Now, by Odin !

Rudolph : Jarl Osric, curb thy wrath ;
Our names are sign'd, our words have gone forth.

Hugo :

I blame thee, Thurston.

Thurston : And I, too, blame
Myself, since I follow a knight so tame !
[*Thurston goes out.*

Osric :
The Saxon hound, he said I lied !

Rudolph :
I pray thee, good Viking, be pacified.

Osric :
Why do we grant the terms they ask ?
To crush them all were an easy task.

Dagobert :
That know'st thou not ; if it come to war,
They are stronger, perhaps, than we bargain for.

Eric :
Jarl Osric, thou may'st recall thy words—
Should we meet again.

Osric : Should we meet with swords,
Thou, too, may'st recall them to thy sorrow.

Hugo :
Eric ! we dally. Sir Count, good-morrow.

SCENE—THE GUEST-CHAMBER OF THE CONVENT

HUGO, ERIC, *and* ORION.

Eric :
Hugo, their siege we might have tried ;
This place would be easier fortified
Than I thought at first ; it is now too late,
They have cut off our access to the gate.

Hugo :

I have weigh'd the chances and counted the cost,
And I know by the stars that all is lost
If we take up this quarrel.

Eric : So let it be !
I yield to one who is wiser than me. (*Aside.*)
Nevertheless, I have seen the day
When the stars would scarcely have bade us stay.

Enter the ABBOT, CYRIL, *and other monks.*

Hugo :

Lord Abbot, we greet thee. Good fathers all,
We bring you greeting.

Orion (*aside*) : And comfort small.

Abbot :

God's benediction on you, my sons.

Hugo :

May He save you, too, from Norsemen and Huns !
Since the gates are beleaguer'd and walls begirt
By the forces of Osric and Dagobert ;
'Tis a heavy price that the knaves demand.

Abbot :

Were we to mortgage the Church's land
We never could raise what they would extort.

Orion (*aside*) :

The price is too long and the notice too short.

Eric :

And you know the stern alternative.

Abbot :

If we die we die, if we live we live ;
God's will be done ; and our trust is sure
In Him, though His chast'nings we endure.
Two messengers rode from here last night,
To Otto they carry news of our plight ;
On my swiftest horses I saw them go.

Orion (aside) :

Then his swiftest horses are wondrous slow

Eric :

One of these is captive and badly hurt :
By the reckless riders of Dagobert
He was overtaken and well nigh slain,
Not a league from here on the open plain.

Abbot :

But the other escap'd.

Eric : It may be so ;
We had no word of him, but we know
That unless you can keep these walls for a day
At least, the Prince is too far away
To afford relief.

Abbot : Then a hopeless case
Is ours, and with death we are face to face.

Eric :

You have arm'd retainers.

Cyril (a Monk): Aye, some half score;
And some few of the brethren, less or more,
Have in youth the brunt of the battle bided,
Yet our armoury is but ill provided.

Hugo:
We have terms of truce from the robbers in chief,
Though the terms are partial, the truce but brief;
To Abbess, to nuns, and novices all,
And to every woman within your wall,
We can offer escort, and they shall ride
From hence in safety whate'er betide.

Abbot:
What escort, Hugo, canst thou afford?

Hugo:
Some score of riders who call me lord
Bide at the farm not a mile from here,
Till we rejoin them they will not stir;
My page and armourer wait below,
And all our movements are watch'd by the foe.
Strict stipulation was made, of course,
That, except ourselves, neither man nor horse
Should enter your gates—they were keen to shun
The chance of increasing your garrison.

Eric:
I hold safe conduct here in my hand,
Signed by the chiefs of that lawless band;
See Rudolph's name, no disgrace to a clerk,
And Dagobert's scrawl, and Osric's mark;
Jarl signed sorely against his will,
With a scratch like the print of a raven's bill;

But the foe have muster'd in sight of the gate.
For another hour they will scarcely wait ;
Bid Abbess and dame prepare with haste.

Hugo :

Lord Abbot, I tell thee candidly
There is no great love between thou and I,
As well thou know'st ; but, nevertheless,
I would we were more, or thy foes were less.

Abbot :

I will summon the Lady Abbess straight.
[*The Abbot and Monks go out.*

Eric :

'Tis hard to leave these men to their fate,
Norseman and Hun will never relent ;
Their day of grace upon earth is spent.
[*Hugo goes out, followed by Orion.*

SCENE—THE CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THE GUEST-CHAMBER.

HUGO *pacing up and down.* ORION *leaning against the wall.*

Hugo :

My day of grace with theirs is past,
I might have saved them ; 'tis too late—
Too late for both. The die is cast,
And I resign me to my fate.
God's vengeance I await.

Orion :

The boundary 'twixt right and wrong
Is not so easy to discern ;
And man is weak and fate is strong,
And destiny man's hopes will spurn,
Man's schemes will overturn.

Hugo :

Thou liest, thou fiend ! Not unawares
The sinner swallows Satan's bait,
Nor pits conceal'd nor hidden snares
Seeks blindly ; wherefore dost thou prate
Of destiny and fate ?

Orion :

Who first named fate ? But never mind,
Let that pass by—to Adam's fall
And Adam's curse look back, and find
Iniquity the lot of all,
And sin original.

Hugo :

But I have sinn'd, repented, sinn'd,
Till seven times that sin may be
By seventy multiplied ; the wind
Is constant when compared with me,
And stable is the sea !

My hopes are sacrificed, for what ?
For days of folly, less or more,
For years to see those dead hopes rot,
Like dead weeds scatter'd on the shore,
Beyond the surfs that roar !

Orion :

The wiles of Eve are swift to smite ;
Aye, swift to smite and not to spare—
Red lips and round limbs sweet and white,
Dark eyes, and sunny, silken hair,
Thy betters may ensnare.

Hugo :

Not so ; the strife 'twixt hell and heaven
I felt last night, and well I knew
The crisis ; but my aid was given
To hell. Thou'st known the crisis too,
For once thou'st spoken true.

Having foretold it, there remains
For grace no time, for hope no room ;
Even now I seem to feel the pains
Of hell, that wait beyond the gloom
Of my dishonour'd tomb.

Thou who hast lived and died to save
Us sinners, Christ of Galilee !
Thy great love pardon'd and forgave
The dying thief upon the tree,
Thou canst not pardon me !

Dear Lord ! hear Thou my latest prayer,
For prayer must die since hope is dead ;
Thy Father's vengeance let me bear,
Nor let my guilt be visited
Upon a guiltless head !

Ah ! God is just ! Full sure I am
He never did predestinate
Our souls to hell. Ourselves we damn—
[*To Orion, with sudden passion*]
Serpent ! I know thee now, too late ;
Curse thee ! Work out thy hate !

Orion:

I hate thee not; thy grievous plight
Would move my pity, but I bear
A curse to which thy curse seems light;
Thy wrong is better than my right,
My day is darker than thy night;
Beside the whitest hope I share
How white is thy despair!

SCENE—THE CHAPEL OF THE CONVENT

URSULA, AGATHA, *Nuns and Novices.*

(*Hymn of the Nuns*):

Jehovah! we bless Thee,
All works of Thine hand
Extol Thee, confess Thee,
By sea and by land,
By mountain and river,
By forest and glen,
They praise Thee for ever!
And ever! Amen!

The heathen are raging
Against Thee, O Lord!
The ungodly are waging
Rash war against God!
Arise, and deliver
Us, sheep of Thy pen,
Who praise Thee for ever!
And ever! Amen!

Thou, Shepherd of Zion!
Thy firstlings didst tear
From jaws of the lion,
From teeth of the bear;
Thy strength to deliver
Is strong now as then.
We praise Thee for ever!
And ever! Amen!

Thine arm hath deliver'd
Thy servants of old,
Hath scatter'd and shiver'd
The spears of the bold,
Hath emptied the quiver
Of bloodthirsty men.
We praise Thee for ever!
And ever! Amen!

Nathless shall Thy right hand
Those counsels fulfil
Most wise in Thy sight, and
We bow to Thy will;
Thy children quail never
For dungeon or den,
They praise Thee for ever!
And ever! Amen!

Though fierce tribulation
Endure for a space,
Yet God! our salvation!
We gain by Thy grace

At end of life's fever,
Bliss passing man's ken,
There to praise Thee for ever!
And ever! Amen!

SCENE—THE GUEST-ROOM OF THE CONVENT

HUGO, ERIC, *and* ORION.

Enter URSULA, AGATHA, *and Nuns.*

Ursula:

Hugo, we reject thine offers,
Not that we can buy
Safety from the Church's coffers,
Neither can we fly.
Far too great the price they seek is,
Let their lawless throng
Come, we wait their coming; weak is
Man, but God is strong.

Eric:

Think again on our proposals,
It will be too late
When the robbers hold carousals
On this side the gate.

Ursula:

For myself I speak and others
Weak and frail as I;
We will not desert our brothers
In adversity.

Hugo (*to the Nuns*) :

Does the Abbess thus advance her
Will before ye all ?

A Nun :

We will stay.

Hugo : Is this thine answer,
Agatha ? The wall
Is a poor protection truly,
And the gates are weak,
And the Norsemen most unruly.
Come, then.

A Nun (*to Agatha*) : Sister, speak !

Orion (*aside to Hugo*) :

Press her ! She her fears dissembling,
Stands irresolute ;
She will yield—her limbs are trembling,
Though her lips are mute.

[*A trumpet is heard without.*

Eric :

Hark ! their savage war-horn blowing
Chafes at our delay.

Hugo :

Agatha, we must be going.
Come, girl !

Agatha (*clinging to Ursula*) : Must I stay ?

Ursula :

Nay, my child, thou shalt not make me
Judge ; I cannot give
Orders to a novice.

Agatha : Take me,
Hugo ! Let me live !

Eric (to Nuns) :
Foolish women ! will ye tarry,
Spite of all we say ?

Hugo :
Must we use our strength and carry
You by force away ?

Ursula :
Bad enough thou art, Sir Norman,
Yet thou wilt not do
This thing. Shame !—on men make war, man
Not on women few.

Eric :
Heed her not—her life she barters,
Of her free accord,
For her faith ; and, doubtless, martyrs
Have their own reward.

Ursula :
In the Church's cause thy father
Never grudged his blade—
Hugo, did he rue it ?

Orion : Rather !
He was poorly paid.

Hugo :
Abbess, this is not my doing,
I have said my say ;
How can I avert the ruin,
Even for a day,

Since they count two hundred fairly,
While we count a score;
And thine own retainers barely
Count a dozen more?

Agatha (*kneeling to Ursula*):
Ah! forgive me, Lady Abbess,
Bless me ere I go;
She who under sod and slab is
Lying, cold and low,
Scarce would turn away in anger
From a child so frail;
Not dear life, but deadly danger,
Makes her daughter quail.

Hugo:
Eric, will those faces tearful
To God's judgement seat
Haunt us?

Eric: Death is not so fearful.

Hugo: No, but life is sweet—
Sweet for once, to me, though sinful.

Orion (*to Hugo*): Earth is scant of bliss,
Wisest he who takes his skinful
When the chance is his.

(*To Ursula*):
Lady Abbess! stay and welcome
Osric's savage crew;
Yet when pains of death and hell come,
Thou thy choice may'st rue.

Ursula (to Orion) :

What dost thou 'neath roof-trees sacred ?
Man or fiend, depart !

Orion :

Dame, thy tongue is sharp and acrid,
Yet I bear the smart.

Ursula (advancing and raising up a crucifix) :

I conjure thee by this symbol
Leave us !

[*Orion goes out hastily.*

Hugo : Ha ! the knave,
He has made an exit nimble :
Abbess ! thou art brave.
Yet once gone, we're past recalling ;
Let no blame be mine.
See, thy sisters' tears are falling
Fast, and so are thine.

Ursula :

Fare you well ! the teardrop splashes
Vainly on the ice.
Ye will sorrow o'er our ashes
And your cowardice.

Eric :

Sorry am I, yet my sorrow
Cannot alter fate ;
Should Prince Otto come to-morrow,
He will come too late.

Hugo:

Nay, old comrade, she hath spoken
Words we must not hear;
Shall we pause for sign or token—
Taunted twice with fear?
Yonder, hilt to hilt adjusted,
Stand the swords in which we trusted
Years ago. Their blades have rusted,
So, perchance, have we.
Ursula! thy words may shame us,
Yet we once were counted famous,
Morituri, salutamus,
Aut victuri, te! [*They go out.*

SCENE—THE OUTSKIRTS OF RUDOLPH'S CAMP

RUDOLPH, OSRIC, *and* DAGOBERT. HUGO.

Rudolph:

Lord Hugo! thy speech is madness;
Thou hast tax'd our patience too far:
We offer'd thee peace—with gladness,
We gladly accept thy war.

Dagobert:

And the clemency we extended
To thee and thine we recall;
And the treaty 'twixt us is ended—
We are ready to storm the wall.

Osric:

Now tear yon parchment to tatters;
Thou shalt make no further use
Of our safeguard; the wind that scatters
The scroll shall scatter the truce.

Hugo :

Jarl Osric, to save the spilling
Of blood, and the waste of life,
I am willing, if thou art willing,
With thee to decide this strife ;
Let thy comrades draw their force back ;
I defy thee to single fight,
I will meet thee on foot or horseback,
And God shall defend the right.

Rudolph :

No single combat shall settle
This strife ; thou art overbold—
Thou hast put us all on our mettle,
Now the game in our hands we hold.

Dagobert :

Our lances round thee have hover'd,
Have seen where thy fellows bide ;
Thy weakness we have discover'd,
Thy nakedness we have spied.

Osric :

And hearken, knight, to my story—
When sack'd are the convent shrines,
When the convent thresholds are gory,
And quaff'd are the convent wines :
When our beasts with pillage are laden,
And the clouds of our black smoke rise
From yon tower, one fair-haired maiden
Is singled as Osric's prize.
I will fit her with chain and collar
Of red gold, studded with pearls ;
With bracelet of gold, Sir Scholar,
The queen of my captive girls.

Hugo (*savagely*) :

May the Most High God of battles,
The Lord and Ruler of fights,
Who breaketh the shield that rattles,
Who snappeth the sword that smites,
In whose hands are footmen and horsemen,
At whose breath they conquer or flee,
Never show me His mercy, Norseman !
If I show mercy to thee.

Osric :

What, ho ! art thou drunk, Sir Norman ?
Has the wine made thy pale cheek red ?
Now, I swear by Odin and Thor, man,
Already I count thee dead.

Rudolph :

I crave thy pardon for baulking
The flood of thine eloquence,
But thou canst not scare us with talking,
I therefore pray thee go hence.

Osric :

Though I may not take up thy gauntlet,
Should we meet where the steel strikes fire,
'Twixt thy casque and thy charger's frontlet
The choice will perplex thy squire.

Hugo :

When the Norman rowels are goading,
When glitters the Norman glaive,
Thou shalt call upon Thor and Odin :
They shall not hear thee nor save.

'Should we meet!' Aye, the chance may fall so,
In the furious battle drive,
So may God deal with me—more, also!
If we separate, both alive!

SCENE—THE COURTYARD OF THE OLD FARM

EUSTACE *and other followers of* HUGO *and* ERIC *lounging about. Enter* THURSTON *hastily, with swords under his arm.*

Thurston:

Now saddle your horses and girth them tight,
And see that your weapons are sharp and bright.
Come, lads, get ready as fast as you can.

Eustace:

Why, what 's this bustle about, old man?

Thurston:

Well, it seems Lord Hugo has changed his mind,
As the weathercock veers with the shifting wind;
He has gone in person to Osric's camp,
To tell him to pack up his tents and tramp!
But I guess he won't.

Eustace: Then I hope he will:
They are plenty to eat us, as well as to kill.

Ralph:

And I hope he won't—I begin to feel
A longing to moisten my thirsty steel.

[*They begin to saddle and make preparations for a skirmish.*

Thurston :

I've a couple of blades to look to here.
In their scabbards I scarcely could make them stir
At first, but I'll sharpen them both ere long.

A Man-at-arms :

Hurrah for a skirmish ! Who'll give us a song ?

Thurston (*sings, cleaning and sharpening*) *:*

Hurrah ! for the sword ! I hold one here,
And I scour at the rust and say,
'Tis the umpire this, and the arbiter,
That settles in the fairest way ;
For it stays false tongues and it cools hot blood,
And it lowers the proud one's crest ;
And the law of the land is sometimes good,
But the law of the sword is best.
In all disputes 'tis the shortest plan,
The surest and best appeal ;—
What else can decide between man and man ?

(*Chorus of all*) *:*

Hurrah ! for the bright blue steel !

Thurston (*sings*) *:*

Hurrah ! for the sword of Hugo, our lord !
'Tis a trusty friend and a true ;
It has held its own on a grassy sward,
When its blade shone bright and blue.
Though it never has stricken in anger hard,
And has scarcely been cleansed from rust,

Since the day when it broke through Harold's guard
With our favourite cut and thrust ;
Yet Osric's crown will look somewhat red,
And his brain will be apt to reel,
Should the trenchant blade come down on his head—

(*Chorus of all*) :
Hurrah ! for the bright blue steel !

Thurston (*sings*) :
Hurrah ! for the sword of our ally bold,
It has done good service to him ;
It has held its own on an open wold,
When its edge was in keener trim.
It may baffle the plots of the wisest skull,
It may slacken the strongest limb,
Make the brains full of forethought void and null,
And the eyes full of far-sight dim ;
And the hasty hands are content to wait,
And the knees are compelled to kneel,
Where it falls with the weight of a downstroke straight—

(*Chorus of all*) :
Hurrah ! for the bright blue steel !

Thurston (*sings*) :
Hurrah ! for the sword—I've one of my own ;
And I think I may safely say,
Give my enemy his, let us stand alone,
And our quarrel shall end one way ;
One way or the other—it matters not much,
So the question be fairly tried.

Oh ! peacemaker good, bringing peace with a touch,
Thy clients will be satisfied.
As a judge, thou dost judge—as a witness, attest,
And thou settest thy hand and seal,
And the winner is blest, and the loser at rest—

(*Chorus of all*) :

Hurrah ! for the bright blue steel !

[*Hugo and Eric enter during the last verse of the song.*

Hugo :

Boot and saddle, old friend,
Their defiance they send ;
Time is short—make an end
Of thy song.
Let the sword in this fight
Strike as hard for the right
As it once struck for might
Leagued with wrong.

Ha ! Rollo, thou champest
Thy bridle and stampest,
For the rush of the tempest
Dost long ?
Ho ! the kites will grow fatter
On the corpses we scatter,
In the paths where we shatter
Their throng.

Where Osric, the craven,
Hath reared the black raven
'Gainst monks that are shaven
And cowl'd :

Where the Teuton and Hun sit,
In the track of our onset,
Will the wolves, ere the sunset,
Have howl'd.

Retribution is good,
They have revell'd in blood,
Like the wolves of the wood
They have prowl'd.
Birds of prey they have been,
And of carrion unclean,
And their own nests (I ween)
They have foul'd.

Eric:

Two messengers since
Yestermorn have gone hence,
And ere long will the Prince
Bring relief.
Shall we pause?—they are ten
To our one, but their men
Are ill-arm'd, and scarce ken
Their own chief;
And for this we give thanks:
Their disorderly ranks,
If assail'd in the flanks,
Will as lief
Run as fight—loons and lords.

Hugo:

Mount your steeds! draw your swords!
Take your places! My words
Shall be brief:

Ride round by the valley,
Through pass and gorge sally—
The linden trees rally
Beneath.
Then, Eric and Thurston,
Their ranks while we burst on,
Try which will be first on
The heath.

(*Aside*) :

Look again, mother mine,
Through the happy starshine,
For my sins dost thou pine ?
With my breath,
See ! thy pangs are all done,
For the life of thy son :
Thou shalt never feel one
For his death.

[*They all go out but Hugo, who lingers to tighten his girths. Orion appears suddenly in the gateway.*

Orion :

Stay, friend ! I keep guard on
Thy soul's gates ; hold hard on
Thy horse. Hope of pardon
Hath fled !
Bethink once, I crave thee,
Can recklessness save thee ?
Hell sooner will have thee
Instead.

Hugo :

Back ! My soul, tempest-toss'd,
Hath her Rubicon cross'd :
She shall fly—saved or lost !
Void of dread !
Sharper pang than the steel,
Thou, oh, serpent ! shalt feel,
Should I set the bruised heel
On thy head.

[*He rides out.*

SCENE—A ROOM IN THE CONVENT TOWER OVERLOOKING THE GATE

URSULA *at the window.* AGATHA *and Nuns crouching or kneeling in a corner.*

Ursula :

See, Ellinor ! Agatha ! Anna !
While yet for the ladders they wait,
Jarl Osric hath rear'd the black banner
Within a few yards of the gate ;
It faces our window, the raven,
The badge of the cruel sea-kings,
That has carried to harbour and haven
Destruction and death on its wings.

Beneath us they throng, the fierce Norsemen,
The pikemen of Rudolph behind
Are mustered, and Dagobert's horsemen
With faces to rearward inclined ;
Come last, on their coursers broad-chested,
Rough-coated, short-pastern'd and strong,
Their casques with white plumes thickly crested,
Their lances barb-headed and long :

They come through the shades of the linden,
Fleet riders and war-horses hot :
The Normans, our friends—we have sinn'd in
Our selfishness, sisters, I wot—
They come to add slaughter to slaughter,
Their handful can ne'er stem the tide
Of our foes, and our fate were but shorter
Without them. How fiercely they ride !

And ' Hugo of Normandy ! ' ' Hugo ! '
' A rescue ! a rescue ! ' rings loud,
And right on the many the few go !
A sway and a swerve of the crowd !
A springing and sparkling of sword-blades !
A crashing and 'countering of steeds !
And the white feathers fly 'neath their broad blades
Like foam-flakes ! the spear-shafts like reeds !

A Nun (*to Agatha*) :
Pray, sister !

Agatha : Alas ! I have striven
To pray, but the lips move in vain
When the heart with such terror is riven.
Look again, Lady Abbess ! Look again !

Ursula :
As leaves fall by wintry gusts scatter'd,
As fall by the sickle ripe ears,
As the pines by the whirlwind fall shatter'd,
As shatter'd by bolt fall the firs—
To the right hand they fall ! to the left hand
They yield ! They go down ! they give back !
And their ranks are divided and cleft, and
Dispers'd and destroy'd in the track !

Where, stirrup to stirrup, and bridle
To bridle, down-trampling the slain!
Our friends, wielding swords never idle,
Hew bloody and desperate lane
Through pikemen, so crowded together
They scarce for their pikes can find room,
Led by Hugo's gilt crest, the tall feather
Of Thurston, and Eric's black plume!

A Nun (*to Agatha*):
Pray, sister!

Agatha: First pray thou that heaven
Will lift this dull weight from my brain,
That crushes like crime unforgiven.
Look again, Lady Abbess! Look again!

Ursula:
Close under the gates men are fighting
On foot where the raven is rear'd!
'Neath that sword-stroke, through helm and skull smiting,
Jarl Osric falls, cloven to the beard!
And Hugo, the hilt firmly grasping,
His heel on the throat of his foe,
Wrenches back. I can hear the dull rasping,
The steel through the bone grating low!
And the raven rocks! Thurston has landed
Two strokes, well directed and hard,
On the standard pole, wielding, two-handed,
A blade crimson'd up to the guard.

Like the mast cut in two by the lightning,
The black banner topples and falls !
Bewildering ! back-scattering ! affright'ning !
It clears a wide space next the walls.

A Nun (*to Agatha*) *:*
Pray, sister !

Agatha : Does the sinner unshriven,
With naught beyond this life to gain,
Pray for mercy on earth or in heaven ?
Look again, Lady Abbess ! Look again !

Ursula :
The gates are flung open, and straightway,
By Ambrose and Cyril led on,
Our own men rush out through the gateway ;
One charge, and the entrance is won !
No ! our foes block the gate and endeavour
To force their way in ! Oath and yell,
Shout and war-cry wax wilder than ever !
Those children of Odin fight well ;
And my ears are confused by the crashing,
The jarring, the discord, the din ;
And mine eyes are perplex'd by the flashing
Of fierce lights that ceaselessly spin ;
So when thunder to thunder is calling,
Quick flash follows flash in the shade,
So leaping and flashing and falling,
Blade flashes and follows on blade !
While the sward, newly plough'd, freshly painted,
Grows purple with blood of the slain,
And slippery ! Has Agatha fainted ?

Agatha :

Not so, Lady Abbess ! Look again !

Ursula :

No more from the window ; in the old years
I have look'd upon strife. Now I go
To the courtyard to rally our soldiers
As I may—face to face with the foe.

[*She goes out.*

SCENE—A ROOM IN THE CONVENT

THURSTON *seated near a small fire.*
Enter EUSTACE.

Eustace :

We have come through this skirmish with hardly a scratch.

Thurston :

And without us, I fancy, they have a full batch
Of sick men to look to. Those robbers accurs'd
Will soon put our soundest on terms with our worst.
Nathless I'd have bartered, with never a frown,
Ten years for those seconds when Osric went down.
Where 's Ethelwolf ?

Eustace : Dying.

Thurston : And Reginald ?

Eustace : Dead.

And Ralph is disabled, and Rudolph is sped.
He may last till midnight—not longer. Nor Tyrrel,
Nor Brian, will ever see sunrise.

Thurston : That Cyril,
The monk, is a very respectable fighter.

Eustace :
Not bad for a monk. Yet our loss had been lighter
Had he and his fellows thrown open the gate
A little more quickly. And now, spite of fate,
With thirty picked soldiers their siege we might weather,
But the Abbess is worth all the rest put together.
[*Enter Ursula.*

Thurston :
Here she comes.

Ursula : Can I speak with your lord ?

Eustace : 'Tis too late,
He was dead when we carried him in at the gate.

Thurston :
Nay, he spoke after that, for I heard him myself ;
But he won't speak again, he must lie on his shelf.

Ursula :
Alas ! is he dead, then ?

Thurston : As dead as St. Paul.
And what then ? to-morrow we, too, one and all,
Die to fatten these ravenous carrion birds.
I knelt down by Hugo and heard his last words :
' How heavy the night hangs—how wild the waves dash ;
Say a mass for my soul—and give Rollo a mash.'

Ursula :

Nay, Thurston, thou jestest.

Thurston : Ask Eric. I swear
We listened, and caught every syllable clear.

Eustace :

Why, his horse was slain too.

Thurston : 'Neath the linden trees grey,
Ere the onset, young Henry rode Rollo away ;
He will hasten the Prince, and they may reach your gate
To-morrow—though to-morrow for us is too late.
Hugo rode the boy's mare, and she 's dead, if you like—
Disembowel'd by the thrust of a freebooter's pike.

Eustace :

Neither Henry nor Rollo we ever shall see.

Ursula :

But we may hold the walls till to-morrow.

Thurston : Not we.
In an hour or less, having rallied their force,
They'll storm your old building—and take it, of course,
Since of us, who alone in war's science are skill'd,
One-third are disabled, and two-thirds are kill'd.

Ursula :

Art thou hurt ?

Thurston : At present I feel well enough,
But your water is brackish, unwholesome, and rough ;

Bring a flask of your wine, dame, for Eustace and I,
Let us gaily give battle, and merrily die.
[*Enter Eric, with arm in sling.*

Eric :

Thou art safe, Lady Abbess ! The convent is safe.
To be robbed of their prey, how the ravens will chafe;
The vanguard of Otto is looming in sight :
At the sheen of their spears, see thy foemen take flight.
Their foremost are scarce half a mile from the wall.

Thurston :

Bring the wine, lest those Germans should swallow it all.

Scene—THE CHAPEL OF THE CONVENT

(*Dirge of the Monks.*)

Earth to earth, and dust to dust,
Ashes unto ashes go.
Judge not. He who judgeth just,
Judgeth merciful also.
Earthly penitence hath fled,
Earthly sin hath ceased to be;
Pile the sods on heart and head,
Miserere Domine !

Hominum et angelorum,
Domine ! precamur te
Ut immemor sis malorum—
Miserere Domine !
(*Miserere !*)

Will the fruits of life brought forth,
  Pride and greed, and wrath and lust,
Profit in the day of wrath,
  When the dust returns to dust?
Evil flower and thorny fruit
  Load the wild and worthless tree,
Lo! the axe is at the root,
  Miserere Domine!

Spes, fidesque, caritasque,
Frustra fatigant per se,
Frustra virtus, forsque, fasque,
Miserere Domine!
(*Miserere!*)

Fair without and foul within,
  When the honey'd husks are reft
From the bitter sweets of sin,
  Bitterness alone is left,
Yet the wayward soul hath striven
  Mostly hell's ally to be,
In the strife 'twixt hell and heaven,
  Miserere Domine!

Heu! heu! herbâ latet anguis—
Caro herba—carni vae—
Solum purgat, Christi sanguis,
Miserere Domine!
(*Miserere!*)

Pray that in the doubtful fight
  Man may win through sore distress,
By His goodness infinite,
  And His mercy fathomless.

Pray for one more of the weary
Head bowed down and bended knee,
Swell the requiem, *Miserere!*
Miserere Domine!

Bonum, malum, qui fecisti
Mali imploramus te,
Salve fratrem, causâ Christi,
Miserere Domine!
(*Miserere!*)

APPENDIX 1

STRAY POEMS OF GORDON

'I AM WEARY, LET ME GO'[1]

[Mr. Bertram Stevens has informed me that these lines have appeared in a recent South African anthology under the name of another poet.—Ed.]

Lay me low, my work is done,
I am weary. Lay me low,
Where the wild flowers woo the sun,
Where the balmy breezes blow,
Where the butterfly takes wing,
Where the aspens, drooping, grow,
Where the young birds chirp and sing—
I am weary, let me go.

I have striven hard and long
In the world's unequal fight,
Always to resist the wrong,
Always to maintain the right.
Always with a stubborn heart,
Taking, giving blow for blow;
Brother, I have played my part,
And am weary, let me go.

Stern the world and bitter cold,
Irksome, painful to endure;
Everywhere a love of gold,
Nowhere pity for the poor.

[1] From *Australian Poets, 1788–1888.* Edited by Douglas Sladen (Griffith, Farran, Okeden and Welsh: London and Sydney, 1888). By kind permission of its editor.

Everywhere mistrust, disguise,
Pride, hypocrisy, and show,
Draw the curtain, close mine eyes,
I am weary, let me go.

Other chance when I am gone
May restore the battle-call,
Bravely lead the good cause on
Fighting in the which I fall.
God may quicken some true soul
Here to take my place below
In the heroes' muster roll—
I am weary, let me go.

Shield and buckler, hang them up,
Drape the standards on the wall,
I have drained the mortal cup
To the finish, dregs and all;
When our work is done, 'tis best,
Brother, best that we should go—
I am weary, let me rest,
I am weary, lay we low.

VAE VICTIS![1]

BY 'ONE OF THE LEGION OF THE LOST'

THERE was revel on Flemington Course,
Clamour of tongues and clatter of feet,
Rider to rider and horse to horse,
'"Twas a China orange to Lombard Street.'

[1] By the kind courtesy and permission of Mr. J. Howlett-Ross, author of *The Laureate of the Centaurs: A Memoir of the Life of Adam Lindsay Gordon.* London: Samuel J. Mullen, 29 Ludgate Hill, 1888. [This book is now out of print, but a second and enlarged edition is in preparation.]

There were bookmakers, trainers, touts,
Heavy swells and their jockeys light,
The man that drinks and the man that shouts,
Carrier pigeon and carrion kite.

Wheresoever the carcass lies,
There will the eagles gather together,
And the shambles swarm with the summer flies
That buzz and drone in the summer weather.

'Vae Victis! Woe to the conquered!
Gone our luck is, lick'd we are;
I warrant my friend "Mr. Peter Prankerd"
Would have made an investment safer far.'

For the partisans of Falcon quailed,
And the backers of Barwon felt a chill,
And the stride of Lady Heron failed,
And Cowra stopped, and Mozart stood still.

In the Stand the faces of many paled,
And the pulses of many stayed on the hill,
When through his horses the Exile sailed,
And raised the hopes he couldn't fulfil.

Tell it not in the city of gold,
In Dowling Forest publish it not,
How he flagged and tired, the four-year-old,
Long or ever a place he got.

He was black as the raven's wing,
Black and yellow his rider's garb,
And I heard the 'cabbage-tree' chorus sing
A paean loud to the conquering Barb.

'Vae Victis! Woe to the conquered!
Shall we confess it, sooth to say,
'Twas after another colt we hankered,
But he couldn't pull it off that day.'

Who knows whether he might have won;
He was beaten, every one knows.
What does it matter? the race is run,
P'r'aps he was taken bad with the slows.

Health and credit to Mister Tait,
Honour and glory to New South Wales:
We hope against hope, we fight against fate,
Those Sydney scrubbers will show their tails.

And some must sow for others to reap,
And some must frown for others to grin,
And some must watch that others may sleep,
And some must lose that others may win.

Days of sorrow and days of mirth,
Their pain and pleasure they mingle must;
What does it matter, boys?—earth to earth,
Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust.

The vessel freighted with our hopes, split
On a rock, and the reed we leaned on broke—
Ex nihilo nihil fit—
And the dream of the Smoker ends in smoke.

'Nil desperandum!' Luck to the conquered,
Better, it may be, another time.
Comrades all, here 's luck in a tankard,
Sift the reason out of this rhyme.

EXODUS PARTHENIDAE[1]

THE LAY OF THE LAST SQUATTER

Draw your chair to the fire, old woman,
The days are warm, but the nights are cold;
So, they've hunted our milkers off the common,
And pounded them, calves and all, I'm told.
Had I caught 'Long Henderson' driving 'Molly',
I'd have made him tell me 'the reason why';
He'd scarcely have answered you so jolly,
Had I turned the corner suddenly.

Faith, 'tis time we laid our oars in the rullocks,
We've got no right of commonage now,
And the sheep are sold, and the working bullocks
And the cattle, all but the strawberry cow;
I felt my heart for the moment soften
When the butcher offered me three pound five
For the poor old thing that you've milked so often—
She sha'n't be slaughtered while I'm alive.

And Robinson Brown has sent me his bill, dear,
And Morton Jones has taken the lease,
And the kangaroo dogs, 'Lion' and 'Kildeer',
Are sold for fifty shillings apiece;
I'm sorry to part with the red dog, truly,
At fifty shillings I call him cheap,
But the brindled dog is a trifle unruly—
Oh! Carrington Jackson, mind your sheep.

I'm sure if Giles is satisfied, I am;
The horses averaged well, and though
I'd like to have kept the colt by 'Priam',
'Tis just as well that I let him go;

[1] By the kind courtesy and permission of Mr. J. Howlett-Ross, author of *The Laureate of the Centaurs*. London, 1888.

For if my creditors won't be losers,
I've set them scratching their heads, mayhap,
And you know that some folk mustn't be choosers,
Which folk I belong to—'*verbum sap*'.

I've had an interview with the banker,
And I found him civil, and even kind;
But the game 's up here, we must weigh the anchor,
We've the surf before, and the rocks behind;
So trim the canvas, and clear the gangways,
They've got the great unwashed on their side;
It 's no use sparring with 'Templar Strangways',
It 's no use kicking at 'Lavender Glyde'.

And I guess it 's all U P with the squatter;
The people are crying aloud for the land;
They've made it hot, and they'll find it hotter
When they plough the limestone and sow the sand.
'All flesh is grass,' so saith the preacher;
'All grass is ours,' quoth Randolph Stow;
Is the man related to Harriet Beecher?
With *mobile vulgus* he 's all the go.

And, years to come, in the book of Hansard,
You may read the tale of the frogs retold,
How they prayed for a king, how their prayer was answered,
How the king was crowned, and the frogs were sold,
How they ended, the schemes whose names were 'Legion',
In the Mephistopheles laughter note,
From the depths of 'the Mariner's' gastric region,
That rattled up to his innocent throat.

I wish you'd write me a line to Maddox
(My fingers are cramped with that boring brute);
I'll take his bid for the purchased paddocks,
The sum we mentioned he won't dispute.

I might have made better terms with Parker
If he hadn't known I was forced to sell,
But I couldn't have kept these matters darker,
I didn't try to—'tis just as well.

Fred Carson made an offer for Lancer—
'Twas a little less than his hide would bring;
You may guess I gave him a civil answer,
Which put a stop to his huckstering;
I loosed the old nag at the sliding railing,
And carried my saddle up to the hut;
His eyes, as well as his limbs, are failing,
He scarcely knew when the gate was shut.

Aye, troubles are coming upon us thickly,
'Tis hard to leave the old place at last,
And you're not strong, and the baby's sickly,
And your mother's ailing and aging fast.
I remember the days when credit was plenty,
And years were few; but those days are o'er;
Old Beranger sings of the joys of twenty,
But I shall never see thirty more.

It's no use talking, things might be better,
And then again they might well be worse—
You needn't trouble about that letter,
The youngster's squalling loud for a nurse;
And your hand is surely rather unsteady,
That writing looks to be all askew,
What! are there tears in your eyes already?
Come, old girl, this will never do!

* * * * * *

I might have taken Time by the forelock,
I might have made my hay in the sun,
I might have foreseen—but wizard or warlock
Could never undo what once is done.

And at least I've wantonly injured no man,
Although I've lived on the people's land—
Draw your chair to the fire, old woman,
And mix a drop of the battle-axe brand.

THE OLD STATION[1]

AN UNFINISHED POEM

All night I've heard the marsh-frog's croak,
The jay's rude matins now prevail,
The smouldering fire of bastard oak
Now blazes, freshened by the gale;
And now to eastward, far away
Beyond the range, a tawny ray
Of orange reddens on the grey,
And stars are waning pale.

We mustered once when skies were red,
Nine leagues from here across the plain,
And when the sun broiled overhead
Rode with wet heel and wanton rein.
The wild scrub cattle held their own,
I lost my mates, my horse fell blown;
Night came, I slept here all alone:
At sunrise, riding on again,
I heard yon creek's refrain.

Can this be where the hovel stood
Of old? I knew the spot right well:
One post is left of all the wood,
Three stones lie where the chimney fell.

[1] By the kind courtesy and permission of Mr. J. Howlett-Ross these verses are reproduced from his *The Laureate of the Centaurs: A Memoir of the Life of Adam Lindsay Gordon.* London, 1888.

Rank growth of ferns has wellnigh shut
From sight the ruins of the hut.
There stands the tree where once I cut
  The M that interlaced the L—
  What more is left to tell ?

Aye, yonder in the blackwood shade,
  The wife was busy with her churn ;
The sturdy sunburnt children play'd
  In yonder patch of tangled fern.
The man was loitering to feed
His flocks on yonder grassy mead ;
And where the wavelet threads the weed
  I saw the eldest daughter turn,
  The stranger's quest to learn.

Shone, gold-besprinkled by the sun,
  Her wanton wealth of back blown hair.
Soft silver ripples danced and spun
  All round her ankles bright and bare.
My speech she barely understood,
And her reply was brief and rude ;
Yet God, they say, made all things good
  That He at first made fair.

. . . . . .

(Note.—The manuscript here is rather blurred and indistinct, and probably the author's words are not accurately copied, as the sense is rather vague.)

She bore a pitcher in her hand
  Along the shallow, slender streak
Of shingle-coated shelving sand
  That splits two channels of the creek ;

She plunged it where the current whirls,
Then poised it on her sunny curls,
Waste water decked with sudden pearls
  Her glancing arm and glowing cheek ;
  What more is left to speak ?

It matters not how I became
  The guest of those who lived here then ;
I now can scarce recall the name
  Of this old station ; long years, ten—
Or twelve it may be—have flown past,
And many things have changed since last
I left the spot, for years fly fast,
  And heedless boys grow haggard men
  Ere they the change can ken.

The spells of those old summer days
  With glory still the passes deck,
The sweet green hills still bloom and blaze
  With crimson gold and purple fleck.
For these I neither crave nor care,
And yet the flowers perchance are fair
As when I twined them in her hair,
  Or strung them chainwise round her neck.
  What now is left to reck ?

The pure clear streamlet undefiled
  Durgles (?) thro' flow'ry uplands yet ;
It lisps and prattles like a child,
  And laughs, and makes believe to fret,
O'erflowing rushes rank and high ;
And on its dimpled breast may lie
The lily and the dragon-fly.

. . . . . .

(Note.—The manuscript, which is carelessly written and unrevised, abruptly leaves off here.)

ARGEMONE

[This little-known poem has not been included hitherto in any edition of Gordon. It was written by him for the album of Miss Riddoch about a year before his death. The manuscript is now in the possession of Mr. Randolph Bedford, author of *True Eyes and the Whirlwind*, &c., and we are indebted to the courtesy of Mr. J. H. Taylor, Town Clerk of Brighton, Victoria, who has a copy of it, for its insertion in this Appendix. The similarity of sentiment and expression in this poem to those of some other of Gordon's poems may have been his reason for discarding it from his third volume of verse.]

The terrible night-watch is over,
I turn where I lie,
To eastward my dim eyes discover
Faint streaks in the sky;
Faint streaks on a faint light that dapples
And dawns like the ripening of apples,
Closes with darkness and grapples,
And darkness must die.

And the dawn finds us where the dusk found us—
The quick and the dead;
Thou dawn-slaying darkness around us,
Oh! slay me instead!
Thou pitiless earth that would sever
Twain souls, reuniting them never,
Oh, gape and engulf me for ever,
Oh, cover my head!

The toils that men strive with stout-hearted,
The fears that men fly,
I have known them, but they have departed,
And thou hast gone by.
Men toiling, and straining, and striving,
Are glad, peradventure, for living;
I render for life no thanksgiving,
Glad only to die.

Too alike to me now are all changes,
  Naught gladdens, naught grieves.
Alike, now, pale snow on the ranges,
  Pale gold on the sheaves.
Alike now the hum of glad bees on
Green boughs, and the sigh of sad trees on
Sere uplands, the fall of the season,
  The fall of the leaves.

Alike now each wind blows the breezes
  That kiss where they roam,
The breath of the March wind that freezes
  In the rime of the loam ;
The storm-blast that lashes and scourges,
And rends the white crests of the surges,
As it sweeps with the thunder of dirges
  Across the sea foam.

Alike now all rainfall and down-fall,
  Foul seasons and fair ;
Let the rose on my patch or the thorn fall,
  I heed not, nor care ;
Nor for grey light of dawn, nor for dun light
Of dusk, nor for dazzle of sunlight
At noon ; shall I seek light, or shun light ?
  Seek warmth or seek care ?

Nor for breaking of fast neither grateful,
  Nor for quenching of thirst,
In the dawn of the eventide hateful,
  In the noontide accurst,
In the watch of the night sleep-forsaken
Till that sleep comes, no watch shall re-waken,
Be the best things of life never taken,
  Never feared be the worst.

Skies laugh, and buds bloom, and birds warble
  At breaking of day :
Without and within, on grey marble,
  The light glimmers grey :
O pale, silent mouth, surely this is
The spot where death strikes and life misses :
Warm lips, pressing cold lips, waste kisses
  Clay-cold as cold clay.

Through sunset, and twilight, and nightfall,
  And night-watches bleak,
We have lain thus. Now broad rays of light fall,
  And flicker, and streak ;
The death-chamber glancing and shining,
Where death and dead life lie reclining,
My hand with her hand intertwining,
  My cheek to her cheek.

I adjure thee by days spent together,
  (So sad and so few),
By the seasons of fair and foul weather,
  By the rose and the rue ;
By the storms and the joys of past hours,
By the thorns of the earth and the flowers,
By the sun of the skies and the showers,
  By the mist and the dew,

By the time that annihilates all things—
  Our woes and our crimes ;
By the gath'ring of great things and small things
  At the end of all times,
Let thy soul answer mine through the portal
Of the grave, if the soul be immortal
(As the wise men of all climes have taught all
  The fools of all climes).

If these men speak truth I come quickly—
  My life does thee wrong :
Dost thou languish in shades peopled thickly
  With phantoms that throng ?
Have they known thee, my love ? Hast thou known one
To welcome the stranger and lone one ?
O loved one, O lost one, mine own one,
  I tarry not long.

The flower that no more shall enwreath us
  Turns sunward : the dove
Sails skyward : the grass is beneath us,
  The birds are above.
Those skies, an illegible letter,
Seem fairer and farther, scarce better
Than earth to man, crushed by life's fetter
  When lifeless is love.

And none can love twice, says the heathen,
  And none can twice die :
More hopeful than these are, are we then,
  With hopes past the sky,
Yon judge—will He swerve from just sentence
For tardy, fear-stricken repentance ?
Ask those who came hither and went hence,
  But hope no reply.

And He who shall judge us in light :
  How, then, shall I trust
In Him, having sinned in His sight ?
  . . . Is jealous and just ;
So priests taught me once, in their learning
Perplexed, slower still in discerning :
Are ashes to ashes returning,
  And dust seeking dust

Can life thrive when life's love expires ?
  Are life and love twain ?
Men say so. Nay, all men are liars,
  Or all lives are vain.
Let our dead loves and lives be forgotten
With the ripening of fruits that are rotten ;
So we loving fools, dust-begotten,
  Go dustward again.

A. Lindsay Gordon.

VERSES INSPIRED BY 'MY OLD BLACK PIPE'

[These lines were originally supplied by the courtesy of Mr. W. Trainor, of Moonee Ponds, Victoria, to the compilers of *Reminiscences and Unpublished Poems of Adam Lindsay Gordon*, Somerset Publishing Company, Sydney and Melbourne, 1905, and have been transcribed for this edition from one of the rare copies of that book in the Melbourne Public Library.]

Aye ! Many a sport old Homer names,
By Achilles held 'at his little games',
On the banks of the swift Scamander ;
And Pindar sings the Olympian deeds
Of the ivory car and milk-white steeds
  Of Catullus or Lysander.

How clouds of dust aloft were spurn'd
By wheels that grazed the goals as they turn'd
Till the bright sparks flicker'd redly ;
How the strains of mingled mirth and fury,
That swell'd in the chant of 'Morituri',
  Proclaimed when the sports were deadly.

Ah ! little we cared for classic lore,
When Greek was a task and Latin a bore,

In school-days that are deemed of yore;
And who will venture to chide us,
If better we loved the play-field green,
And the black-thorn hedge that served as a screen
In the mills that settled our boyish spleen,
From the tutor's eyes to hide us?

Who envies the bygone days of old?
They never were half so good as we're told;
Their loss is not worth bewailing.
We have seen young Camel's slashing stride,
And Archer's rush, and Mormon's pride;
And the deer-like bound of Ingleside,
At 'five-foot-three' of a paling.

We've seen how the side of Falcon bled,
And the hopes of Arinna's backers fled
When the Rose of Denmark shot ahead,
And never again they caught her.
How false were the shouts of 'Barwon 's first!'
When she came 'from the distance home' with a burst
And the favourite's friends devoutly cursed
Old Premier's gamest daughter.

What cheers for King Alfred's white-faced son
Were heard when the Western chase was done,
And the judge's verdict given;
While Vandyke fell in the beaten ranks,
And the red spots showed on the mare's great flanks
How vainly the steel was driven.

And with anxious longing we wait the day,
When the prads must strip for the coming fray,
To be criticized in rotation;

But to spot the winner we will not try,
For a mist obscures our mental eye,
And we have not the power of prophecy,
Nor the spirit of divination.

Yet in fancy's glass we may scan the course,
And hear the bookmaker's challenge hoarse,
The odds incessantly dunning;
We may watch the starter's signal fall,
And the nags may picture, one and all,
For a Cup in a cluster running.

And mark, as they sweep before the stand
How Ebor is going well in hand,
And Banker is pulling double;
How longer each moment grows the tail,
As one by one the outsiders fail,
To get into grief and trouble.

How Trainor pulls out of Waldock's track,
And Morrison steadies the Caulfield crack,
While up on the right comes the rose and black
Like an eagle that scents the plunder;
How round the turn they jostle and crush,
And Simpson clears his whip for a rush,
And then on the crowd comes a lull and a hush
And then a roar like thunder.

And when Beaufort collars the Western pet,
Then Greek meets Greek, unconquered yet,
And the tug of war commences;
As stride for stride, with the stroke of one,
Like greyhounds running with couples on
Together they fly their fences.

There 'Vates' and 'Rhyming Richard' too,
Can tell much better than I or you
What nags are likely the trick to do,
Nor will I their judgement sneer at;
If the gift of second sight were mine,
I'd make a fortune, and then 'I'd shine',
But I haven't got it, and so I'll sign
'Qui Meruit Palmam Ferat'.

A. Lindsay Gordon.

THE FEUD: A BORDER BALLAD

[Only thirty copies of this poem were printed in 1864, at Mount Gambier on the Victorian border, in the following circumstances:—'Gordon, who at that time lived in the south-east, one night met a number of friends at the Mount Gambier Hotel, and during the evening his attention was drawn to a set of six plates illustrative of the old Border ballad "The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow", engraved from pictures painted by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Noel Paton for the Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland, and issued to that Association's subscribers. Gordon was much pleased with the plates, and intimated to one of the company his intention of using them as a subject for some verses. A day or two later he showed the poem to the gentleman he had spoken to, and an order was given to the proprietors of the *Border Watch* for thirty copies, with the stipulation that the authorship should be kept secret. The lines were printed in pamphlet form, were entitled *The Feud: a Ballad*, and were dedicated by "A. Lindsay" to Noel Paton, R.S.A., as a key to the plates named.'

Mr. Henry G. Turner has pointed out to me that the poem was reprinted in *Literary Opinion* (from which the above quotation is made) for Aug. 1891, having been sent for that purpose by Mr. (now Sir) Langdon Bonython of the South Australian *Advertiser*. Ed.]

Plate I

Rixa super mero

They sat by their wine in the tavern that night,
But not in good fellowship true:
The Rhenish was strong and the Burgundy bright,
And hotter the argument grew.

'I asked your consent when I first sought her hand,
Nor did you refuse to agree,
Tho' her father declared that the half of his land
Her dower at our wedding should be.'

'No dower shall be given (the brother replied)
With a maiden of beauty so rare,
Nor yet shall my father my birthright divide,
Our lands with a foeman to share.'

The knight stood erect in the midst of the hall,
And sterner his visage became,
'Now, shame and dishonour my 'scutcheon befall
If thus I relinquish my claim.'

The brother then drained a tall goblet of wine,
And fiercely this answer he made—
'Before like a coward my rights I resign
I'll claim an appeal to the blade.

'The passes at Yarrow are rugged and wide,
There meet me to-morrow alone;
This quarrel we two with our swords will decide,
And one shall his folly atone.'

They 've settled the time and they 've settled the place,
They 've paid for the wine and the ale,
They 've bitten their gloves, and their steps they retrace
To their castles in Ettrick's Vale.

PLATE II

Morituri (te) salutant

Now, buckle my broadsword at my side
And saddle my trusty steed;
And bid me adieu, my bonnie bride,
To Yarrow I go with speed.

'I 've passed through many a bloody fray
Unharmed in health or limb;
Then why 's your brow so sad this day
And your dark eye so dim?'

'Oh, belt not on your broadsword bright,
Oh! leave your steed in his stall,
For I dreamt last night of a stubborn fight,
And I dreamt I saw you fall.'

'On Yarrow's braes there will be strife,
Yet I am safe from ill;
And if I thought it would cost my life
I must take this journey still.'

He turned his charger to depart
In the misty morning air,
But he stood and pressed her to his heart
And smoothed her glossy hair.

And her red lips he fondly kissed
Beside the castle door,
And he rode away in the morning mist,
And he never saw her more!

Plate III

Heu! deserta domus

She sits by the eastern casement now,
And the sunlight enters there,
And settles on her ivory brow
And gleams in her golden hair.
On the deerskin rug the staghound lies
And dozes dreamily,
And the quaint carved oak reflects the dyes
Of the curtain's canopy.

The lark has sprung from the new-mown hay,
And the plover's note is shrill
And the song of the mavis far away
Comes from the distant hill;
And in the wide courtyard below
She heard the horses neigh,
The men-at-arms pass to and fro
The scraps of border-lay.
She heard each boisterous oath and jest
The rough moss-troopers made,
Who scoured the rust from spur or crest,
Or polished bit or blade.
They loved her well, those rugged men,—
How could they be so gay
When he perchance in some lone glen
Lay dying far away?

She was a fearless Border girl,
Who from her earliest days
Had seen the banners oft unfurl
And the war-beacons blaze—
Had seen her father's men march out,
Roused by the trumpet's call,
And heard the foeman's savage shout
Close to their fortress wall.
And when her kin were arming fast,
Had belted many a brand—
Why was her spirit now o'ercast?
Where was her self-command?
She strove to quell those childish fears,
Unworthy of her name;
She dashed away the rising tears,
And, flushed with pride and shame,
She rose and hurried down the stair,
The castle yard to roam;

And she met her elder sister there,
Come from their father's home,
'Sister, I 've ridden here alone,
Your lord and you to greet.'
'Sister, to Yarrow he has gone
Our brother there to meet;
I dreamt last night of a stubborn fray
Where I saw him fall and bleed,
And he rode away at break of day
With his broadsword and his steed.'
'Oh! sister dear, there will be strife:
Our brother likes him ill,
And one or both must forfeit life
On Yarrow's lonely hill.'

A stout moss-trooper, standing near,
Spoke with a careless smile:
'Now, have no fear for my master dear,—
He may travel many a mile,
And those who ride on the Border side,
Albeit they like him not,
They know his mettle has oft been tried
Where blows were thick and hot.
He left command that none should go
From hence till home he came;
But, lady, the truth you soon shall know
If you will bear the blame.
Your palfrey fair I'll saddle with care,
Your sister shall ride the grey,
And I'll mount myself on the sorrel mare,
And to Yarrow we 'll haste away.'

The sun was low in the western sky,
And steep was the mountain track,
But they rode from the castle rapidly—
Oh! how will they travel back?

Plate IV

Gaudia certaminis

He came to the spot where his foe had agreed
To meet him in Yarrow's dark glade,
And there he drew rein and dismounted his steed,
And fastened him under the shade.

Close by in the greenwood the ambush was set,
And scarce had he entered the glen
When, armed for the combat, the brother he met,
And with him were eight of his men.

'Now, swear to relinquish all claim to our land,
Or to give as a hostage your bride!
Or fly if you're able, or yield where you stand,
Or die as your betters have died!'

His doublet and hat on the greensward he threw,
He wrapt round the left arm his cloak;
And out of its scabbard his broadsword he drew,
And stood with his back to an oak.

'My claim to your land I refuse to deny,
Nor will I restore you my bride,
Nor will I surrender, nor yet will I fly:
Come on, and the steel shall decide!'

Oh! sudden and sure were the blows that he dealt!
Like lightning the sweep of his blade!
Cut and thrust, point and edge, all around him they fell,
They fell one by one in the glade!

And pierced in the gullet their leader goes down!
And sinks with a curse on the plain;
And his squire falls dead! cut through headpiece and crown!
And his groom by a back stroke is slain.

Now five are stretched lifeless ; disabled are three !
Hard pressed, see the last caitiff reel !
The brother behind struggles up on one knee,
And drives through his body the steel.

Plate V

Non habeo mihi facta adhuc cur Herculis uxor
Credar coniugii mors mihi pignus erit.

The traitor's father heard the tale,
In haste he mounted then,
And spurred his horse from Ettrick Vale
To Yarrow's lonely glen,
Some troopers followed in his track—
For them he tarried not,
He neither halted nor looked back
Until he found the spot.

The earth was trod and trampled bare,
And stained with dark red dew,
A broken blade lay here, and there
A bonnet cut in two ;
And stretched in ghastly shapes around
The lifeless corpses lie,
Some with their faces to the ground,
And some towards the sky.
And there the ancient Border chief
Stood silent and alone—
Too stubborn to give way to grief,
Too stern remorse to own.
A soldier in the midst of strife
Since he had first drawn breath,
He'd grown to undervalue life
And feel at home with death.
And yet he shuddered when he saw
The work that had been done ;
He knew his fearless son-in-law,
He knew his dastard son.

Despite the failings of his race
A brave old man was he,
Who would not stoop to actions base,
And hated treachery.
He loved his younger daughter well,
And though severe and rude,
For her sake he had tried to quell
That foolish Border feud.
Her brother all his schemes had marred,
And given his pledge the lie,
And sense of justice struggled hard
With nature's stronger tie.
He knew his son had richly earned
The stroke that laid him low,
Yet had not quite forgiveness learned
For him that dealt the blow.

There came a tramp of horses' feet:
He raised his startled eyes,
And felt his pulses throb and beat
With sorrow and surprise.
He saw his daughter riding fast,
And from her steed she sprung,
And on her lover's corpse she cast
Herself, and round him clung.
Her head she pillowed on his waist,
And all her clustering hair
Hung down, disordered by her haste
In silken masses there.
Her sister and their sturdy guide
Dismounted and drew nigh,
The elder daughter stood aside—
Her tears fell silently.

The stout moss-trooper glanced around
But not a word he said;

He knelt upon the battered ground
And raised his master's head.
The face had set serene and sad,
Nor was there on the clay
The stamp of that fierce soul which had
In anger passed away.

With dagger blade he ripped the skirt,
The fatal wound to show,
And wiped the stains of blood and dirt
From throat and cheek and brow.
And all the while she did not stir,
She lay there calm and still,
Nor could he hope to comfort her,—
Her case was past his skill.
The father first that silence broke;
His voice was firm and clear,
And every accent that he spoke
Fell on the listener's ear.
'Daughter, this quarrel to forgo,
I offered half our land
A dower to him—a feudal foe—
When first he sought your hand.
I only asked for some brief while,
Some few short weeks' delay,
Till I my son could reconcile;
For this he would not stay.
He was your husband, so I'm told;
But you yourself must own
He took you to his fortress-hold
With your consent alone.

Of late the strife broke out anew;
They blame your brother there;
But he was hot and headstrong, too—
He doubtless did his share.

Oh! stout of heart, and strong of hand,
With all his faults was he,
The champion of his Border land;
I ne'er his judge will be!
Now, grieve no more for what is done;
Alike we share the cost;
For, girl, I too have lost a son,
If you your love have lost.
Forget the deed! and learn to call
A worthier man your lord
Than he whose arm has vexed us all;
Here lies his fatal sword.
Think, when you seek his guilt to cloak,
Whose blood has dyed it red,
Who fell beneath its deadly stroke,
Whose life is forfeited.'
The old man paused, for while he spoke
The girl had raised her head.

Her silken hair she proudly dashed
Back from her crimson face!
And in her bright eyes once more flashed
The spirit of her race!
Her beauty made him stand abashed!
Her voice rang thro' the place!

'Who held the treacherous dagger's hilt
When against odds he fought?
My brother's blood was fairly spilt!
But his was basely sought!
Now, Christ absolve his soul from guilt;
He sinned as he was taught!

'His next of kin by blood and birth
May claim his house and land!

His groom may slack his saddle-girth,
Or bid his charger stand!
But never a man on God's wide earth
Shall touch his darling's hand!'

The colour faded from her cheek,
Her eyelids drooped and fell,
And when again she sought to speak
Her accents came so low and weak
Her words they scarce could tell.

'Oh! father, all I ask is rest,—
Here let me once more lie!'
She stretched upon the dead man's breast
With one long weary sigh;
And the old man bowed his lofty crest
And hid his troubled eye!

They called her, but she spoke no more,
And when they raised her head
She seemed as lovely as before,
Though all her bloom had fled;
But they grew pale at that they saw—
They knew that she was dead!

Plate VI

Dies irae: dies illa

The requiem breaks the midnight air, the funeral bell they toll,—
A mass or prayer we well may spare, for a brave moss-trooper's soul;
And the fairest bride on the Border side, may she too be forgiven!
The dirge we ring, the chant we sing, the rest we leave to Heaven!

APPENDIX II

IN MEMORIAM A. L. GORDON[1]

A POEM BY HENRY KENDALL

At rest! Hard by the margin of that sea
Whose sounds are mingled with his noble verse
Now lies the shell that never more will house
The fine strong spirit of my gifted friend.
Yea, he who flashed upon us suddenly,
A shining soul with syllables of fire,
Who sang the first great songs these lands can claim
To be their own; the one who did not seem
To know what royal place awaited him
Within the Temple of the Beautiful,
Has passed away; and we who knew him sit
Aghast in darkness, dumb with that great grief
Whose stature yet we cannot comprehend;
While over yonder churchyard, hearsed with pines,
The nightwind sings its immemorial hymn,
And sobs above a newly-covered grave.
The bard, the scholar, and the man who lived,
That frank, that open-hearted life which keeps
The splendid fire of English chivalry
From dying out; the one who never wronged
A fellow man; the faithful friend who judged
The many, anxious to be loved of him,
By what he saw, and not by what he heard,
As lesser spirits do; the brave, great soul

[1] By the kind courtesy and permission of Messrs. Wilson and Mackinnon, proprietors of *The Argus* and *The Australasian*, Melbourne, in the columns of the latter of which the verses first appeared, and of Messrs. George Robertson & Co. Propty., Ltd., of Melbourne, the owners of the copyright of Kendall's Poems.

That never told a lie, or turned aside
To fly from danger—he, as I say, was one
Of that bright company this sin-stained world
Can ill afford to lose.

They did not know,
The hundreds who had read his sturdy verse
And revelled over ringing major notes,
The mournful meaning of the undersong
Which runs through all he wrote, and often takes
The deep autumnal, half-prophetic tone
Of forest winds in March ; nor did they think
That on that healthy-hearted man there lay
The wild specific curse which seems to cling
For ever to the Poet's twofold life !

To Adam Lindsay Gordon, I who laid
Two years ago on Lionel Michael's grave
A tender leaf of my regard ; yea, I
Who culled a garland from the flowers of song
To place where Harpur sleeps ; I, left alone,
The sad disciple of a shining band,
Now gone—to Adam Lindsay Gordon's name
I dedicate these lines ; and if 'tis true
That, past the darkness of the grave, the soul
Becomes omniscient, then the bard may stoop
From his high seat to take the offering,
And read it with a sigh for human friends,
In human bonds, and grey with human griefs.

And having wove and proffered this poor wreath,
I stand to-day as lone as he who saw
At nightfall, through the glimmering moony mist,
The last of Arthur on the wailing mere,
And strained in vain to hear the going voice.

HENRY KENDALL.

APPENDIX III

GORDON AS A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

On November 3, 1865, we have the following sample of one of Gordon's parliamentary speeches. The Government of the day had, by reason of its appointment of Mr. H. E. Downer as Commissioner of Insolvencies, been attacked by the Opposition, and the following report is taken from the South Australian *Hansard*:

'Mr. Gordon preferred that the motion should be met in a straightforward way to meeting it by resorting to the previous question. When he came to the House he had no intention of speaking to the question, but since it had assumed a hostile shape he thought it well to say a few words. He was not acquainted at all with the gentleman named in the notice, but regarding it as a hostile motion he would speak accordingly. He was rather astonished last session at a remark of an honourable member now in office, but then on the other side of the House, to the effect that the Government of the day had been exposed to nothing like such attacks as their predecessors were subjected to. Well, scarcely a week passed this session before a vote of censure was brought forward, and certainly if that was mere child's play the position of the present Ministry might be regarded as a most unenviable one (laughter). He could not see the utility of such ceaseless strife, which tended to impede the progress of business indefinitely. The Opposition were like the heads of the Hydra—*Quique*

redundabat foecundo vulnere serpens; and like the spearsman on the field of Flodden :

> Each stepping where his comrade stood
> The instant that he fell.

(Laughter.) The principle of the *lex talionis* was of course recognized to a great extent, and those who were ejected from office did not feel much leniency towards their successors ; but he trusted that the independent members who did not take office—simply perhaps from there being no chance of their obtaining it—(laughter)—would set their faces against these frequent changes, which could not but prove injurious to the welfare of the Colony. There was once in England, he believed, a gentleman who made himself conspicuous as a king-maker during the wars between the Houses of York and Lancaster. He came to grief somewhere, which was rather a pity, for he was a decent sort of a man in spite of his peculiar habit of mind. But what he wished to say was that they might do better than the Earl of Warwick, who could scarcely be regarded as a good leader, seeing that he could not even support Governments of his own creating. (Hear, and a laugh.) He did not wish to bring historical parallels of too old a date, but he would say that if Macaulay was right in saying that the Cavaliers fought with the Roundheads in a neighbourly and courteous manner, the same could not be said of political antagonists. If there was a civil war it certainly was not very polite, and the way they went about it was not likely to promote harmony and good feeling, or, as the member for Light would say, "conviviality". (Hear, and laughter.) He did not regret having recorded a silent vote the other day on the motion of the honourable member Mr. Townsend, and he was quite ready to defend it on political grounds ;

but it appeared to him that the words "*Tros Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine agetur*" applied, which might be freely translated—"East Adelaide and West Torrens are all one to me, and I shall support what measures I approve of, from whatever source they may come". (Laughter.) He believed the difficulty of forming Ministries arose not from a dearth of talent in the House, but from a superfluity of that article. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) They were oppressed with an *embarras de richesses*, and he threw out this suggestion for what it was worth, namely, that the Treasury Benches should be enlarged, if only to give accommodation to a few supernumeraries. (Laughter.) With regard to the question before the House—(hear, hear)—he would say that the fame of Mr. Downer had not yet reached the South-East, but he should oppose the motion, as it was a hostile one. He intended to support the Government whenever he could fairly do so, always giving them the benefit of the doubt where doubt existed.'

II

We get an admirable picture of the poet in Parliament from the pen of the late Alexander Sutherland, Gordon's most careful and accurate biographer:

'As an orator the poet was no success. During the first session he spoke nine times, but more than once it happened that he merely stammered through a few words, lost the thread of his subject, came to an awkward pause, and sat down without finishing his sentence. But on two occasions he felt himself bound by his election pledges to speak up. The first occurred on June 6 [1865], about a fortnight after he had taken his seat; he prepared a careful speech, got over his first nervousness, and then, by a sort of reaction, dropped into a free-and-

easy style, hand in pocket, nodding in a friendly way to the Speaker as if they two had been brothers. The subject was the renewal of the annual leases whereby the squatters held their land, and blocked the way for the crowds who yearned to farm it.

'"Sir," said Gordon, "last week the Government and this honourable House, after a long discussion and a great deal of speechifying, good, bad, and indifferent, passed a resolution which I had the honour of supporting. Why should they now rescind that resolution? I cannot understand the policy which would one day cast a resolution, and knock it upon the head on the next.

'"It looks to me like labour in vain, and calls to mind the legend in the Greek mythology, where Sisyphus is engaged in continually rolling a stone up a hill, an employment in itself probably agreeable enough, but decidedly monotonous. (Laughter.) Or like the snail in the schoolboy's problem, which goes up the hill two inches by day and falls back one inch every night. But there at least some progress is made. Our motto ought to be 'Advance'—*Nulla vestigia retrorsum.* Shall we emulate that renowned commander, who with twenty thousand men marched up a hill and then marched down again?

'"It is a matter of sublime indifference to me personally whether 'Trojan or Tyrian', whether squatter or anti-squatter gains the ascendency. They tell me that the squatters must go to the wall. Well, it won't hurt me; that's one comfort. And perhaps—who knows?—in those halcyon days to which the Hon. Treasurer tells us we may now look forward, when the *ad valorem* duties are repealed, when the blessings of free distillation are reaped by the public in general, and by the teetotalers in particular; when railways and such-like Utopian luxuries flourish in the South-Eastern

scrub,—in short, when we enjoy a sort of colonial millennium, who knows, I say, but that some of us, in the fullness of our hearts, may devise some scheme to shorten the period of rebuke and blasphemy to which we have been justly doomed, the condemned class, the *enfants perdus*, the *morituri*, the squatters.

'"It is absurd for the squatters to say that the course we are pursuing is not legal. If not so already, we can pass an Act to make it legal. Sir, the Government can confiscate your property or mine, and make that legal by an Act. They may make it law, and if it is law I presume it is justice. But I'll be hanged if they can make you or me call it justice; at least they wouldn't make me."

'So did this erratic orator wander on, and at no time was it clear for three minutes together which of the two sides he was supporting. Then he concluded with this classical outburst, about as little suited to the time and audience, as if a man should apostrophize his washerwoman in the words of Aeschylus.

'"I think the squatters have had their day, and they ought to have made hay while the sun was shining. Probably many of them have, but I do not think that that is any reason for oppressing them heedlessly and wantonly. This quarrel is not one of extermination. It has engendered much ill-feeling, has grown wearisome and tedious, and I think it is time to put an end to it. The attacks and reprisals, the mutual recriminations, the bitter invective and coarse personal abuse that passed on both sides are enough to make a man regret that the march of civilization has swept away the customs of the Middle Ages, and abolished the good old ordeal of battle. (Laughter.)

'"I have confidence in the moderation of the Government, and think that they will countenance no crusade

against the squatters. I was going to say I had faith in the Government, but I am told that too much faith is a bad thing nowadays, even too much faith in a Ministry.

Cui neque apud Danaos usquam locus, insuper ipsi Dardanidae infensi poenas cum sanguine poscunt."

'These paragraphs are specimens taken from a somewhat long and decidedly rambling address. It may easily be imagined that it created more of amusement than of solid impression.

'Mr. Glyde, who replied, stated that if Mr. Gordon had not been a young member of the House, he would long ago have been called to order, his speech, though interesting in itself, having been wholly irrelevant. Whilst he was speaking the gas of the Legislative Chamber suddenly went out, and in total darkness Gordon had to listen to a sharp attack on his views and his expressions.

'This was Gordon's only serious brush with his fellow-members. As a rule, he was regarded as a somewhat eccentric young man, with whom it was of little use to interfere. The want of tact which was his failing all through life was most conspicuous in Parliament. Wherein could lie the practical use of quoting long classical passages to squatters and successful business-men? Eleven allusions in one speech to mythology, with choice excerpts of two or three lines each from Virgil, only tickled them as a far-off tinkle of the incomprehensible. They laughed and went on with their practical business. He felt that he was making no impression, yet attended conscientiously to his duties, missing only one day of the second session.' [1]

[1] From *The Development of Australian Literature.* By Henry Gyles Turner and Alexander Sutherland. George Robertson & Co., 1898, pp. 169–173.

APPENDIX IV

A VOICE FROM THE BUSH

'A Voice from the Bush' originally appeared as 'Under the Trees'. The authenticity of this poem has been doubted, and the following summary of the evidence for and against is derived from Mr. Howlett-Ross's memoir. The late Marcus Clarke was sometimes accused of having inserted in the poet's collected works a poem that was not written by Gordon, and also with having made sundry alterations therein. As a matter of fact Marcus Clarke always had doubts as to Gordon being the author of the poem. His own words on one occasion were 'For my own part I do not think that Gordon wrote "A Voice from the Bush" at all. The lines are spirited, certainly, but rigid to a degree. Gordon's ear for rhythm was as acute as is Kendall's or Swinburne's. The penultimate stanza beginning "I watch them but from afar" is surely not by the pen which wrote the "Ballad of Britomarte"'. He further says: 'Mr. J. C. F. Johnson and Mr. Lavington Glyde both write, however, positively asserting that Mr. Clark told them that the verses were written by Mr. Morris. "When speaking to Mr. John Howard Clark about some verses of my own, 'Found Dead,' about the authorship of which a question was raised," says Mr. Johnson, "he distinctly told me that the poem now credited to Gordon was written by Mr. Morris." Mr. Lavington Glyde is still more circumstantial. "I well remember," says he, "saying to my old friend Mr. J. Howard Clark, 'Who is your new poet?' on the day when those verses first

appeared as 'Under the Trees' in 'Geoffrey Crabthorne', for I recognized the genuine ring of true poetry in them. He declined to tell me, but on my pressing him, whispered 'the Cherub', as Mr. Morris was popularly called in those days. I thought Mr. Clark joking at first, but he assured me that Mr. Morris was the author, and I believe his information was correct. Soon after Mr. Morris left the colony I was surprised to find the piece under the title of 'A Voice from the Bush', in *Temple Bar* of May 1873." Mr. J. Walter Tyas stands up for the Gordon theory, assuming that Gordon gave the verses to Morris, and Morris gave them to Clark, who, naturally enough, ascribed the authorship to the sender, and backs his opinion by some cited passages, which, if "A Voice from the Bush" was not written by Gordon, certainly look much like plagiarisms from his works.'

Mr. Tyas writes: 'In Gordon's stanzas entitled "The Sick Stockrider" occur the lines:

With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run of hoofs,
Oh! the hardest day was never then too hard!

'In "A Voice from the Bush" I find the following:

Older, but men to whom
In the pride of their manhood strong;
The hardest work is never too hard,
Nor the longest day too long.

'Again, in "The Sick Stockrider" are the lines:

For good undone, and gifts misspent, and resolutions vain
'Tis somewhat late to trouble. *This I know—*
I should live the same life over if I had to live again,
And the chances are I go where most men go.

In "A Voice from the Bush" the same sentiment is expressed:

> Of the seed I've sown in pleasure,
> The harvest I'm reaping in pain;
> *Could I put my life a few years back,*
> *Would I live that life again?*
> *Would I? Of course I would;*
> What glorious days they were!'

Again Marcus Clarke writes:

'Now it happens that I wrote a preface for the first edition of "Bush Ballads", and this preface being repeated in this present edition, I am not unnaturally credited with the responsibility of inserting the two poems in dispute. Indeed, Mr. Johnson accuses me of purposely altering the metre of "A Voice from the Bush", a freedom which I certainly should not allow myself to take with any author, unless for stated and defensible reasons. The fact is that I never saw the verses at all, until I read them in the issue of the *Advertiser* for the 29th of September, which some unknown friend in Adelaide was good enough to send me. Inquiry at the publishers' has produced but little satisfaction. They believe some "friend" sent the manuscript, but do not remember just now his name.'

These explanations ought to prevent any further accusations of carelessness being hurled at the memory of Australia's most famous novelist.

The poem is certainly Gordonesque in construction, and as claims to the authorship have been so difficult to determine, the publishers have hitherto permitted it to remain in Gordon's works. There is, however, indisputable evidence that the poem was not written by Gordon, it having been emphatically claimed by

Mr. Mowbray Morris, at that time A. D. C. to the Governor of South Australia, afterwards dramatic critic to *The Times*, in a letter written some years ago to Major Ferguson of the S. A. Rifle Brigade. He writes :

'Certainly the verses are mine. I remember both the time and place where I wrote them, lying on my back in a cave at Robe in the autumn of 1871. . . . I was not aware that there was any similarity, unconscious or otherwise, to any verses of Gordon's. I have two volumes of his verse by me, and I cannot detect any conscious plagiarisms. Certainly there were none consciously committed. Mine they are, every line and every word, and they have no business among the writings of any one else.'

The poem has been included in the collected editions of Gordon until quite lately, but it will be parted from with some regret by Gordon lovers, for Marcus Clarke declared that 'whoever wrote the lines the world is richer by them'.

In favour of their authenticity a small piece of internal evidence occurs in the twelfth stanza :

> Ah ! what wouldn't I give to feel
> A lady's hand again !

For Mrs. Lord in her article in the *Adelaide Observer* recounts a small incident which curiously confirms the desire expressed in these lines. She says in parting from him on one occasion, 'I took my hand from my muff and offered it in farewell. He looked at it as if it were some natural curiosity. He said, "It is the first time I have touched a lady's hand for many a day—my own fault—my own fault—good-bye ; you don't know the world. I do ; don't come again."'

The following is the poem in question:

A VOICE FROM THE BUSH

High noon, and not a cloud in the sky
To break this blinding sun.
Well, I've half the day before me still,
And most of my journey done.
There's little enough of shade to be got,
But I'll take what I can get,
For I'm not so hearty as once I was,
Although I'm a young man yet.

Young! Well, yes, I suppose,
As far as the seasons go,
Though there's many a man far older than I
Down there in the town below—
Older, but men to whom,
In the pride of their manhood strong,
The hardest work is never too hard,
Or the longest day too long.

But I've cut my cake, so I can't complain,
And I've only myself to blame;
Ah! that was always their tune at home,
And here it is just the same.
Of the seed I've sown in pleasure,
The harvest I'm reaping in pain;
Could I put my life a few years back,
Would I live that life again?

Would I? Of course I would!
What glorious days they were!
It sometimes seems the dream of a dream,
That life could have been so fair,

A sweet but if a short time back,
While now, if one can call
This life, I almost doubt at times
If it's worth the living at all.

One of these poets, which is it?
Somewhere or another sings,
That the crown of a sorrow's sorrow
Is remembering happier things.
What the crown of a sorrow's sorrow
May be, I know not; but this I know,
It lightens the years that are now
Sometimes to think of the years ago.

Where are they now, I wonder, with
Whom those years were pass'd?
The pace was a little too good, I fear,
For many of them to last.
And there's always plenty to take their place
When the leaders begin to decline;
Still I wish them well, where'er they are,
For the sake of 'Auld Lang Syne'.

Jack Villiers—Galloping Jack—
(What a beggar he was to ride!)—
Was shot in a gambling row last year,
On the Californian side.
And Byng, the best of the lot,
Who was broke in the Derby of '58,
Is keeping sheep with Harry Lepel,
Somewhere on the River Plate.

Do they ever think of me at all,
And the fun we used to share?
It gives me a pleasant hour or two,
And I've none too many to spare.

This dull blood runs as it used to run,
And the spent flame flickers up,
As I think of the cheers that rang in my ears
When I won the Garrison Cup.

And how the regiment roared to a man,
While the voice of the fielders shook,
As I swang in my stride six lengths to the good,
Hard held, over Bosworth Brook.
Instead of the parrot's screech,
I seem to hear the twang of the horn,
As once again from Barkly Holt,
I set the pick of the Quorn.

Well, those were harmless pleasures enough,
For I hold him worse than an ass
Who shakes his head at a neck on the post,
Or a quick thing over the grass.
Go for yourself, and go to win,
And you can't very well go wrong.
Gad, if I'd only stuck to that,
I'd be singing a different song.

As to the one I'm singing,
It 's pretty well known to all;
We knew too much, but not quite enough,
And so we went to the wall;
While those who cared not if the work was done
How dirty their hands might be,
Went up on our shoulders and kicked us down,
When they got to the top of the tree.

But out there on the station among the lads,
I get on pretty well;
It 's only when I get down into town
That I feel this life such a hell.

Booted and bearded and burn'd to a brick,
I loaf along the street;
I watch the ladies tripping by,
And I bless their dainty feet.

I watch them here and there,
With a bitter feeling of pain;
Ah! what wouldn't I give to feel
A lady's hand again!
They used to be glad to see me once,
They might have been to-day;
But we never know the worth of a thing
Until we have thrown it away.

I watch them but from afar,
And I pull my old cap over my eyes—
Partly to hide the tears that, rude and
Rough as I am, will rise—
And partly because I cannot bear
That such as they should see
The man that I am, when I know—
Though they don't—the man that I ought to be.

Puff! with the last whiff of my pipe,
I blow these fancies away,
For I must be jogging along if I want
To get down to town to-day.
As I know I shall reach my journey's end
Though I travel not over fast;
So the end of my longer journey will come
In its own good time at last.

APPENDIX V

GORDON AS A LETTER-WRITER

As has been said in the Introduction (Part II, p. lii.) Gordon was no letter-writer. He hated putting pen to paper, except to write verse, a fact well known to all his friends in Australia, who never looked for any, save a verbal, reply even to invitations to meet them.

'His letters in the main', as Mr. Sutherland says, 'would be scarcely interesting enough for publication. They deal little with his literary work, and not very much with his riding, or his general way of life. They are mostly filled with business items of only temporary moment.' Mr. G. G. McCrae has one of these colourless, merely personal, letters in his possession, but he prizes it chiefly as a sample of Gordon's handwriting. Two of his letters are worthy of inclusion, however, in this volume, the only two, which the present editor has seen, of more than passing importance. The first is a relatively long letter to his friend Mr. John Riddoch, which sets out the state of his affairs, and of his mind, in October 1868.

'October 6, 1868.

'My dear Riddoch,

I wrote you a short note a few days ago, and promised you a longer one. Mrs. Gordon went away by the steamer *Penola*. She was anxious to get a change, and I was glad for many reasons that she should go away for a time.

I gave up the stables on the first of this month. I have paid altogether £350 for rent. Let me tell you some good

news now before I go to the bad. I have had some money left to me by the deaths of my father's first cousin, and of my grandmother. I ought to have received it long ago. It is not much, but it will set me straight.

I heard last mail from my uncle, Hamilton Gordon. He wants me to go home to England. It seems I am the nearest heir to an entailed estate called Esslemont in Scotland. He thinks it a certainty, but I fancy there is a flaw in the entail. Huntley Gordon, the last owner, left it by will to his daughter, and as the flaw in the entail has not been proved, my uncle wants me to go home and appeal against the will.

I do not think I shall go, even if I could get the estate ; having no male heir it would be of no use to me beyond my lifetime, and that is very uncertain.

I have been awfully bothered about money difficulties ; but I think I have now paid off everybody but you and Lawson (the mortgagee). Getting in the money that is still due to me here is very difficult. But I have sold off everything, and though many things were sacrificed, I did not do so badly after all.

Mrs. Gordon and I did all the work between us. Indeed she did a great deal more than I, all through the troubled time. She has worked like a trump ; although I never told her how desperate things were looking with me, she suspected that much was wrong, and she tried hard to cheer me up and keep me straight, and did not worry me. She has more pluck in her little finger than ever I had in my whole body.

When I lost the Ballarat Hunt Cup on Maude I thoroughly gave in, and refused to ride Cadger for the Selling Steeplechase, saying that it was no use. She said " Don't give in like that, old man ; you've gone too far to back out now, and no one else can ride the horse.

It's only a small stake, but every shilling is of consequence to us now. I was always against racing, but you've taken your own way, and now you must carry it out."

So I rode Cadger and won. Then Viking won the hurdle race. So I didn't do so badly.

You have no idea how sick of horse-racing and steeplechasing I now am; but when a man gets so deep into the mire, it is hard to draw back. I have to ride three races in Melbourne next Saturday, though I am scarcely fit to ride a donkey at present.

I do not fancy I shall have any luck, but my luck can't possibly be worse than it has been. I would like never to see a horse again, let alone ride one.

The stables have been very badly managed, and Mount, though a well-meaning fellow, has a head worse if possible for business than mine. But after that bad fall of mine I was bound to leave the books entirely in his hands, and a pretty mess he made of the accounts. I could hardly have done worse myself.

Since that heavy fall of mine I have taken to drink. I don't get drunk, but I drink a good deal more than I ought to, for I have a constant pain in my head and back. I get so awfully low-spirited and miserable, that if I had a strong sleeping-draught near me, I am afraid I might take it. I have carried one that I should never awake from.

You will perhaps be awfully shocked, old fellow, to see me write in this strain; but I am not exaggerating, at least. If I could only persuade myself that I am a little mad, I might do something of that sort. I really do feel a little mad at times, and I begin to think I have had more trouble than I can put up with, I could almost say more than I deserve, though this would probably be untrue.

When I parted from my wife on the pier and saw the

steamer take her away, I felt sure I should never see her again ; and when I got back to Ballarat, and went into the empty house, I was very low-spirited. I used to smoke all night long. I could not sleep, and had to take a stiff nobbler in the morning. But I got through my work somehow, and settled up all my business.

I am going to send you the new *Colonial*. It is a very good magazine. Marcus Clarke, the editor, is a very nice young fellow.

I returned to Melbourne yesterday, and am staying with Mr. Robert Power at Toorak. You shall hear further from me by the next steamer, if I get through Saturday's work.

Yours very truly,

A. Lindsay Gordon.'

The second is a characteristic note, undated, written to Marcus Clarke, from whose *Memorial Volume*, compiled and edited by Mr. Hamilton Mackinnon and published in Melbourne in 1884, it is quoted here. It is a livelier memento of the poet at a moment when he yielded, as he did too rarely, to the spirit of fun of which he was sometimes capable. Clarke held it amongst his most sacred treasures :

'Yorick Club.

'Dear Clarke,

Scott's Hotel, not later than 9.30 sharp. Moore will be there. Reddock [Query, Riddoch—Editor] and Lyon, Baker and the Powers, besides us ; so if "the Old One" were to cast a net—eh ?—Yours,

A. Lindsay Gordon.'

NOTES

Note 1. (Page 1.)

Podas okus (πόδας ὠκύς), 'swift-footed,' the favourite Homeric epithet applied to Achilles, the hero of the *Iliad*, the son of King Peleus and Thetis, the sea-goddess. This poem is a manly and most original conception of the dying hours of the hero. The *Iliad* closes with the burial of Hector, but according to some legends Achilles made a contract of marriage with Polyena, the daughter of the Trojan king, but was slain by her brother Paris in the Temple of Apollo, where the marriage should have been celebrated. According to other accounts he was slain by Apollo, who assumed the likeness of Paris as a disguise. His ashes were placed in an urn with those of Patroclus, and were buried on the Promontory of Sigeum.

The resemblances in this poem to Tennyson's *Oenone* are as easily traceable as are those between *An Exile's Farewell* (p. 204) and Byron's *Childe Harold's Adieu*.

As evidence of Gordon's love of the old Greek legends, Mr. George Gordon McCrae of Hawthorn, the veteran Australian poet, a fellow member with Gordon of the 'Yorick' Club, Melbourne—(whose two chief works are *The Story of Balladriadro*, which is the first worthy attempt to vitalize the legends of the Australian aborigines, and *The Man in the Iron Mask*, which, after forty years, has still to achieve popularity, though some of the poems therein are marked by passages of great beauty both in thought and expression)—writing in the *Argus* of March 2, 1912, says that Gordon told him, not so very long before his death, that he had in contemplation an entirely new poem, with Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons, for its heroine. A recent paragraph (previous to that date) in the *Argus* announces the discovery in Gordon's old cottage at Brighton of certain unpublished manuscripts, and it may be that among these will be found some skeleton sketch or rough draft or fragments of that poem. Mr. McCrae still remembers Gordon's 'enthusiasm and gesticulation', as he spoke of it, and certainly the Trojan war and the personality of so daring a horsewoman would have afforded scope for the poet's peculiar gifts.

Note 2. Gone. (Page 7.)

In Collins Street. This statue to Burke and Wills, by reason of the tram-lines in Collins Street, has been for many years removed to Spring Street. Burke, with his burly figure and dauntless courage, had always a great fascination for Gordon.

Note 3. Ye Wearie Wayfarer. (Page 11.)

Published in Melbourne in a sporting paper, called *Bell's Life in Victoria,* at the end of October, 1865—Fytte 1 and Fytte 2—the first, a short introduction to the series, and the second, a reminiscence of the hunting-field in the Cotswold Hills—appeared at the end of October in that year. A week later came Fyttes 3 and 4; on November 10th Fyttes 5 and 6. A week later came the seventh instalment of this eccentric series, and the last Fytte of the series appeared on November 24, 1866, and was certainly a somewhat strange production for a sporting newspaper. Mrs. N. A. Lord, in an article contributed to the *Adelaide Observer,* has given some interesting memories of Gordon's life at Mount Gambier, about the period in which these verses were written. (For references to this see Introduction.)

Note 4 A. (Page 13.)

George Griffiths. Mr. Frederick Marshall, the lifelong friend and admirer of Gordon, who refers to this poem in the marginal notes to his well-read volume of *Sea Spray and Smoke Drift,* says that George Griffiths should be Ned Griffiths, and that his horse's real name was not 'Devil-may-care' but 'Box-keeper', but the exigencies of rhyme forbade the use of the latter.

Note 4 B. (Page 13.)

Tom Oliver. It is impossible to determine with accuracy the identity of some of the names mentioned in this verse, but Tom Olliver, usually called 'Black Tom', was a steeplechase rider and trainer, who lived at Prestbury, two miles out of Cheltenham, which seems to have been a sort of Mecca to Lindsay Gordon in his early days. He gave Gordon many hints about riding, and lent him horses, and he also got him out of a bad scrape at Worcester when he broke open a stable, and got

out the horse he was to ride in the Worcester steeplechase, which had been seized by the Sheriff for a debt of its owner's. A warrant had even been issued for Gordon's arrest when Black Tom came to the rescue.

Note 5. (Page 20.)

Thou mayest seek Recreation singing a psalm. Cf. Browning's picture of the 'Little Zion Chapel' in *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, published in 1850.

Note 6. (Page 34.)

Although Cheltenham has almost forgotten Adam Lindsay Gordon, save for the moss-grown gravestone with half-obliterated letters, which marks the last resting-place in Trinity Churchyard of Gordon's father and mother, Gordon himself never forgot all the home that he had ever known. He heard the bells of St. Mary's Parish Church for the last time before he was twenty, but they seem to have gone on chiming in his mind always, and in this poem we have the words:

Hark! the bells on distant cattle
  Waft across the range,
Through the golden-tufted wattle
  Music low and strange;
Like the marriage peal of fairies
  Comes the tinkling sound,
Or like peals of sweet St. Mary's
  On far English ground.

Note 7. Pastor cum. (Page 37.)

Mrs. Lord tells us that in Gordon's home in 1862, just after his marriage, there were to be seen on the bookshelves Horace, Virgil, and Ovid, and that the former's *De Arte Poetica* was a great favourite of his. The Rev. E. T. Woods was also deeply impressed by Gordon's wide knowledge of classical Greek, Latin, French, and English authors, and with his fine memory and literary tastes. He writes: 'It was a puzzle to me then, and still is, how he could manage to get books, and how carry them about, or get time to read them. His only leisure would be in

the evening, and then the light was generally a panican lamp—that is a honeysuckle cone stuck in clay in a panican and surrounded with mutton fat. I have a lively recollection of the difficulties I have had myself in trying to read by such a lamp, and, as Gordon was so near-sighted, I don't know how he managed.'

Note 8. Bellona. (Page 54.)

The influence of Swinburne is very evident in much of Gordon's verse. He imitates him openly and often, not always with marked success. Apart from all question of form, such an influence to a man of Gordon's temperament must have been baneful. In 'Bellona', 'Delilah', and 'The Song of the Surf', the alliteration and form of Gordon's lines suggests how strong on him was that influence.

Note 9. Quare Fatigasti. (Page 80.)

Contributed to the *Australasian* in August 1867. Originally these musical and melancholy lines were published under the title 'Whither Bound', but during the following month they were reprinted in his first volume under their present title.

Note 10. Hippodromania. (Page 83.)

In August 1865 a South Australian horse, named 'Tim Whiffler', was entered by Mr. Walter Craig for the Melbourne Cup. Gordon took an immense interest in his performances, and in *Bell's Life in Victoria* it was more or less usual for the various turf prophets to give their tips for the coming events, and especially for the Melbourne Cup, in verses more or less doggerel-like. Gordon's forecasts of Tim Whiffler's victory are interesting by reason of the fact that they are the first notable verses of his that were ever in print, and though only professing to be one of the riding-tips common in that sporting journal, yet they rise far above any of the other contributions thereto. Tim Whiffler, however, did not win the Cup, only securing the fourth place in a race, the three chief places of which were secured by 'The Barb', 'Exile', and 'Falcon'. The opening verses called 'Visions in the Smoke' are a very literal and accurate picture of Dingley Dell in South Australia, where was the poet's home, and where he

used to wander on foot, or on horseback, across the country to Allandale and Mount Gambier, with glimpses of the blue Southern Ocean in the distance. In 'The Song of the Surf', and in 'The Swimmer', we also have vivid word-pictures of the environment in which some of Gordon's life was passed and some of his verses written.

NOTE 11 A. THE FIELDS OF COLERAINE. (PAGE 89.)

Published in 1866 as part of the series originally called 'Whiffs from the Pipe', describing the chances of the various horses entered for the Great Western Stakes.

NOTE 11 B. CREDAT JUDAEUS APELLA. (PAGE 90.)

Written in response to a request from the editor of *Bell's Life* to supply the paper with a rhyming-tip for the coming Champion Stakes. Gordon had no tip to give, and doubtless, with Tim Whiffler's defeat in his mind, waxes sarcastic against those who put their trust in the prophets. Smith takes his oath that 'Cowra' can win it, while Brown, Jones, and Robinson are equally positive that she has not a hope. 'But,' says the poet in the words of Horace, 'let the Jew Apella believe them, I don't.'

NOTE 11 C. BANKER'S DREAM. (PAGE 93.)

The fourth part of 'Hippodromania' appeared on April 20, 1867, in which the coming performances of 'Ballarat' were extolled, though as a matter of fact before the verses appeared in print the horse had been scratched. Gordon had sold him to Mr. Watson, and the turf records of the time describe him as of 'great pace, great weight-carrying power, and adroitness as a jumper'.

NOTE 11 D. (PAGE 97.)

The fifth part, a rhyming prophecy of the Cup race itself, which he calls *Ex fumo dare lucem*, was published on August 3 of the same year.

NOTE 12. THE SICK STOCKRIDER. (PAGE 118.)

This appeared in the *Colonial Monthly* in 1869. It was at once copied into the *Australasian*, and thence into many of the up-country journals, and achieved a decided popularity. Gordon himself wrote soon after: 'These verses have made quite a stir

in Melbourne, and have been spoken of with praise, but I don't think much of them myself.' Originally the poem ended with the following verse:

I don't suppose I shall, though, for I feel like sleeping sound,
That sleep they say is doubtful. True; but yet
At least it makes no difference to the dead man underground
What the living men remember or forget.
Enigmas that perplex us in the world's unequal strife,
The future may ignore or may reveal,
YET SOME, AS WEAK AS WATER, NED! TO MAKE THE BEST OF LIFE,
Have been, TO FACE THE WORST, AS TRUE AS STEEL.

'This verse has been preserved for us,' says Mr. Alexander Sutherland, 'by the good taste of Mr. J. J. Shillinglaw, who was present when a suggestion was made to Gordon by one of his acquaintances of the *Colonial Monthly* staff, to omit this verse from his manuscript copy'. Mr. Sutherland thinks that Gordon's own instinct was right, and that he probably felt that in this last stanza he was laying bare his own heart for critical inspection, and so withdrew the lines which his own artistic taste would otherwise have retained. Mr. G. G. McCrae, who sent these lines to the editor of *Australian Poets 1788–1888*, published by Messrs. Griffith, Farran, Okeden, and Welsh, in 1888, wrote: 'I send you a verse I got from my friend John Shillinglaw, who, like myself, was a friend of Gordon. I cannot conceive why Gordon should have cut out this concluding verse, as it seems to my mind to confer a completeness upon the whole that would be wanting without.'

The closing lines of the poem as now it stands were taken as expressing Gordon's wish so literally that his grave in the Brighton Cemetery is unfenced and has a wattle-tree growing over it, though it cannot be said there is no 'stone' to mark the spot, for a broken column has been reared by his admirers.

NOTE 13. THE SWIMMER. (PAGE 122.)

The first and second verses are a fine description of the cliffs of Cape Northumberland, where on many a tranquil Sunday Gordon lay and mused, and set down on scraps of paper the poetical expression of his thoughts.

Note 14. From the Wreck. (Page 126.)

This poem is a reminiscence of Gordon's life in the Mount Gambier district. It was some years after he had left the Police Force, and was busy with horses, that the steamship *Admella* was driven ashore on the rocky coast of South Australia near Cape Northumberland, on the stormy night of August 6, 1859. She kept together in spite of the wild seas that swept her deck. The crew and passengers were many days on board, and, on that surf-smitten, lonely shore, with its forbidding cliffs, abandoned all hope of succour. One after another the unhappy people disappeared into the seething waves, but two seamen succeeded in launching a small boat in which, after fifty hours of terrible struggle, they reached Cape Northumberland, and gave the story of the disaster to the lighthouse-keeper. Word was passed on to the neighbouring station, and two of the hands were roused before daybreak to ride with the news to the nearest telegraph station.

The influence of Browning in this poem is most marked. Cf. its lines *passim* with 'How we brought the good news from Ghent to Aix'. See especially Gordon's lines where the mare dies—opposite the little church she gave

> A short sidelong stagger, a long forward lurch,
> A slight choking sob, and the mare had gone down.

Originally the following verse, containing a pleasing reference to another Australian poet, concluded this poem:

> There are songs yet unsung, there are tales yet untold
> Concerning yon wreck that must baffle my pen;
> Let Kendall write legends in letters of gold,
> Of deeds done and known among children of men.

Note 15 A. No Name. (Page 131.)

For some explanation of the circumstances that drew forth this poem from Gordon, see the Introduction. The full story of Gordon's connexion with the lady whose memory is enshrined here, is narrated in documents now in the possession of Mr. J. Howlett-Ross, the author of a memoir of Gordon called *The Laureate of the Centaurs*, published in London in 1888, now

unfortunately out of print, but of which a second edition, now that the lady is dead, will shortly be published containing the whole interesting story. The last line of the poem is spoken in a dramatic quality, for, as we have said, the lady survived Gordon by many years.

Note 15 B. (Page 132.)

The influence of Browning on Gordon is apparent throughout this poem; cf. especially verse 6 with Browning's 'Cristina', verse 1, published in the first edition of *Bells and Pomegranates* in 1842:

She should never have looked at me
If she meant I should not love her!
There are plenty . . . men, you call such,
I suppose . . . she may discover
All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found them:
But I'm not so, and she knew it
When she fixed me, glancing round them.

Note 16. Wolf and Hound. (Page 133.)

On Gordon's debt to Browning throughout this poem, and for its many likenesses to 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came', a quotation from which appears under its title—see the Introduction.

It was probably written at Yallum, where he spent the summer with Mr. Riddoch and his family about New Year, 1869.

Note 17. How we beat the Favourite. (Page 140.)

This poem was re-cast, and perhaps re-written, from old verses of Gordon recounting a Warwickshire memory of his youth. It was printed in the *Australasian*, without the author's name, and has remained ever since as the most popular of all Gordon's poems.

Note 18. Doubtful Dreams. (Page 156.)

Marcus Clarke, the author of Australia's greatest novel, *For the Term of his Natural Life*, with whom Gordon had made an acquaintanceship, though not an intimate friendship, during

his visits to Melbourne, asked him to contribute to the *Colonial Monthly*, which he (Clarke) was then editing; and in December 1868, there appeared the first of a short series of Gordon's poems printed in that magazine, entitled 'Doubtful Dreams'. It is a mournful retrospect of boyish aspirations, and the contrast they present with the grim reality. It was the *Colonial Monthly*, however, that in that year, in an article on Australian poets, assigned the leading place to Gordon. The writer declares that 'Gordon is the most Australian of our literary aspirants. A genuine unconscious tone gives life to his work. We look forward, with some pride and much hope, to the day when it will be a boast to have discovered his genius in 1868.' Mr. Alexander Sutherland is inclined to think that the anonymous writer of this article may have been Marcus Clarke himself, but he adds: 'The style is not to be with any certainty recognized as that of the author of *His Natural Life*.'

NOTE 19. THORA'S SONG. (PAGE 171.)

Originally published in January 1867, in the *Australasian*, and called 'Frustra'. This poem contains some of Gordon's most musical lines, especially in verse 4. It was subsequently slightly altered and introduced as a song into Gordon's dramatic lyric *Ashtaroth*.

In Part III of the Introduction stress has been laid only on Gordon's debt to five of the greater poets of our literature. His many resemblances to Sir Walter Scott and Aytoun will also occur to many readers of the ballads of these writers, while 'Thora's Song', as Mr. Bertram Stevens reminds us, proclaims most unmistakably the influence of Whyte-Melville, to whom Gordon dedicated his 'Bush Ballads', on the Australian poet. Compare Melville's 'Alice of Ormskirk':

> And still the echoing sea-cave rings
> Its one unceasing pitiless strain:
> And still the wild wave dashes and sings,
> 'Never again, love—never again!'

or his 'Nightfall':

> Like a dream the past hath fled,
> All its summer glories shed,

Hope hath vanished, love is dead,
Lonely hours are mine to spend,
Watching ever, watching ever,
Waiting for the end—

with 'Thora's Song', or the first-mentioned poem, 'Alice of Ormskirk,' with Gordon's 'Cui Bono'. Parts of 'Ye Wearie Wayfarer' echo Whyte-Melville's 'The Good Grey Mare', as does Gordon's 'The Last Leap' suggest not a few parallelisms with Whyte-Melville's 'Where the Old Horse Died'.

NOTE 20. A SONG OF AUTUMN. (PAGE 177.)

Written in October or November 1869, at the house of Mr. Robert Power, where Gordon had been spending a time of quiet recovery after his last fall in the hunting-field. A little girl of Mr. Power's, aged five years, was a close companion of his, and one day asking him to gather her a bunch of flowers, she began to moralize on the blossoms that 'died when you pluck them and died when you don't pluck them'; and the poet wrote this mournful lyric on a scrap of paper at that time.

NOTE 21. LAUDAMUS. (PAGE 188.)

There is striking contrast between the exquisite peacefulness of Browning's 'Evelyn Hope' and the tragedy of the scene in the death-chamber here. But even a superficial reading will show that Gordon has here steeped himself in the atmosphere and language and thought of Browning's poem, while the parallelism between the two descriptions of the dead lips and flesh, and the fact that in both poems the lovers' thoughts reach out to the chances and hope of reunion when they too shall have crossed the bar, is still more striking. Cf. too Browning's

The sweet white brow is all of her,

and

There was place and to spare for the frank young smile
And the red young mouth and the hair's young gold

with Gordon's

She is but a marvel of modelled clay,
And the smooth clear white, and the soft, pure red
That we coveted, shall endure no day.

Note 22 A. To my Sister. (Page 194.)

This is his sister Ignez, who had wilfully engaged herself to a young Italian named Ratti of Nice, for whom neither Gordon nor his family had any liking. She too had been born in Madeira. The other sister, Ada (? Fanny), had died a year or two before, and a few days before the *Julia* was tugged out of St. Katherine's Docks preparatory to her long voyage to Australia, Gordon, who had booked his passage by her, seems to have made a pilgrimage to her grave, and just three days before he sailed wrote these verses to Ignez.

It is impossible to reconcile the utterances in them with any other than the universally-accepted story of the real reasons that drove Gordon to leave his native land for Australia—for some summary of which the reader is referred to the Introduction to this volume. Yet Mr. Douglas Sladen, in a paper on Gordon lately read before the Colonial Institute in London, says with regard to the circumstances under which Gordon left England, that statements hitherto accepted require modification, as he has learned from Gordon's cousin, Miss Frances Gordon, who knew him better than any one else, because he stayed a great deal with her father, at Worcester, and he lived with his own father for a long period in Worcester, quite close to her father's house. 'She tells me,' proceeds Mr. Sladen, 'that it is a mistake to think that Lindsay Gordon went to Australia in disgrace. His family had no wish for him to go. He went because he was a courageous, romantic, and adventurous young man, whose mind was inflamed with the stories of the great gold rush. He said, as it were, to himself, "Australia is the place for me."' One may appreciate the spirit of Miss Frances Gordon in writing thus charitably of her cousin after the lapse of so many years, without allowing her statements to weigh against the more probable and better-authenticated story which also has the merit of being confirmed by Gordon himself. Cf. also the poem 'Early Adieux', q. v. *ante*, p. 206.

Note 22 B. (Page 195.)

The fifth verse is, of course, another reference to Gordon's unrequited love, of which 'No Name' (q. v. *ante*, p. 131) contains a fuller statement.

Note 23. The Old Leaven. (Page 198.)

The *Australasian* had been founded in 1866, and in its earliest numbers verses from Gordon's pen, all of them, however, anonymous, appeared from time to time. This rhyming dialogue enjoys the distinction of being the first of these productions, but though a good line here and there stands out in the poem, the lines as a whole will not help Gordon's reputation greatly.

Note 24. An Exile's Farewell. (Page 204.)

Written in a lady's album on board the *Julia* about the end of September 1853, when the vessel was about half-way to Australia.

Note 25. A Hunting Song. (Page 209.)

Written in Cheltenham, probably about the time when Gordon, in his desire to win the well-to-do farmer's consent to his being engaged to his daughter (see Introduction), might have been expected to have given some less unrestrained expression to his love for horses, wine, and women.

Note 26. Ashtaroth. (Page 215.)

Ashtaroth was Gordon's second literary venture. *Sea Spray and Smoke Drift*, the former one, as Mr. Sutherland said, 'most certainly had qualities which would, as years rolled by, have given it a strong reputation, but *Ashtaroth* could have no hope of winning its way by reason of any inherent interest. This is by no means equivalent to the assertion that it has no merits; but its merits are most assuredly not of the sort to command a sale, and practically the whole of the five hundred copies printed lay like a weary load on the shelves of Clarson and Massina, who published it. They were never startled by the appearance of any eccentric person who wanted to buy a copy.'

Mr. Sutherland's criticism of it is worth reproducing:

'*Ashtaroth* is in general sentiment and handling closely akin to *Faust*; but *Ashtaroth* is purely lyrical, while *Faust* is a mingling of the dramatic and the philosophic. Perhaps it is more to the purpose to say that *Ashtaroth* is weak and *Faust* is strong; at least the Australian poem constantly suggests weakness by

constantly reminding the reader of its mighty predecessor. Instead of the profound study of Faust's mind, we have the more or less melodramatic Hugo, distinctly more in touch with the Faust of the opera than the Faust of Goethe's drama. Instead of Mephistopheles we have Orion, with much imitation of the necromancing business.

'The long lyrical monologues of both these theatrical figures are inappropriate. Though often deeply suggestive in their sombre philosophy, and very generally musical, they have none of that keen revelation of human character which alone could give them force and interest. There are verses and lines that stand on a very paltry level, scarcely admissible in the poet's corner of a third-rate newspaper.

> Indeed, I have not the least idea;
> The man is certainly mad.
> He wedded my sister, Dorothea,
> And used her cruelly bad.

A sprinkling of such verses may readily disgust the ear of a reader whose tastes are poetic.

'The Margaret of *Faust* suggests the Agatha of *Ashtaroth*; but the one is flesh and blood, the other a mystical shadow. The Walpurgis Nacht interlude of Goethe is parodied, not without some lyrical beauty, in Gordon's scene of "A peak in a mountainous country, overhanging a rocky pass. Hugo and Orion on black horses. Midnight.' Moreover, Gordon takes from the great master a taste for mediaeval Latin and a certain wilful eccentricity of plot. But the reader who wades through the first half, and begins there to find the imitative element decline, will probably follow with greater pleasure a story of increased intelligibility, and will feel a certain glamour of poetry, even though devoid of that dramatic power which ought to be the life of such a composition.

'Few people, even now, when Gordon's fame is assured, have much liking for *Ashtaroth*. It is not wonderful, therefore, that in the poet's lifetime it attracted no attention.'

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